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ONE WORLD, ONE GAME

NOVEMBER 2007 £3.40

VAN PERSIE
"Thierry who?"

LUCARELLI
"My hero, Che Guevara"

MOURINHO
Where now, Jose?

THE 50 MOST EXCITING TEENAGERS ON THE PLANET

The wonderkids tipped to be tomorrow's superstars

PLUS

EURO 2008 COUNTDOWN
MICHAEL ESSIEN
IVORY COAST
SERIE A SQUAD LISTS

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November 2007

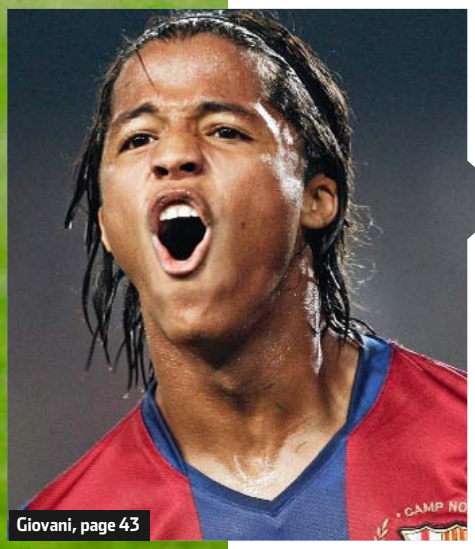
I HOPE YOU can find time over the next few weeks to vote in the *World Soccer* awards. Now in their 26th year, the awards have a unique status within the international game.

World Soccer's worldwide distribution means that the awards have enormous global reach. And we do not just recognise the game's star players – our awards provide the only annual recognition for the world's best teams, managers and young players.

It's always harder to pick the winners in a non-World Cup year; often the teams and players who perform well in September and October have an unfair advantage over those whose best performances came earlier in the year. Either way, there are some strong contenders and the outcome of the vote will be eagerly awaited in early December.

You can register your vote by completing the coupon on page 23, or by visiting our website, www.worldsoccer.com.

GAVIN HAMILTON, Editor
gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com



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Mark Gleeson, a *World Soccer* regular since 1985, is Africa's leading football writer and the founder of South Africa's *Kick Off* magazine.

Lasana Liburd is a sports writer for the *Trinidad Express* and a regular contributor to UK newspapers and the BBC World Service.

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SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTIONS OFFER ON PAGE 62

STARTER FOR TEN

Big questions of the moment

1 WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR THE WOMEN'S GAME AFTER THE WORLD CUP IN CHINA?
Germany retained the title with a 2-0 defeat of Brazil in the Final. More, page 84.

2 WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF IN THE EURO 2008 QUALIFIERS?
Italy, the world champions in 1982, failed to qualify for Euro 1984. And, as World Cup holders again, they are in danger of missing out on next summer's finals.

3 COULD LIONEL MESSI BEAT KAKA TO THE END-OF-YEAR PLAYER AWARDS?
The outstanding form of the Barcelona starlet in September and October has prompted speculation that the battle could be closer than expected. More, page 28.

4 WHAT IS GOING ON WITH SCOTTISH FOOTBALL?
OK, the national team lost in Georgia, but a home victory over Ukraine following a win in France last month edged Scotland closer to Euro 2008, while Celtic and Rangers both recorded important wins in the Champions League. More, pages 16 & 91.

5 HOW LONG WILL FIFA PRESIDENT SEPP BLATTER CONTINUE TURNING A BLIND EYE TO JACK WARNER'S FINANCIAL AFFAIRS IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO?
The CONCACAF president is embroiled in a row about World Cup bonuses. More, page 18.

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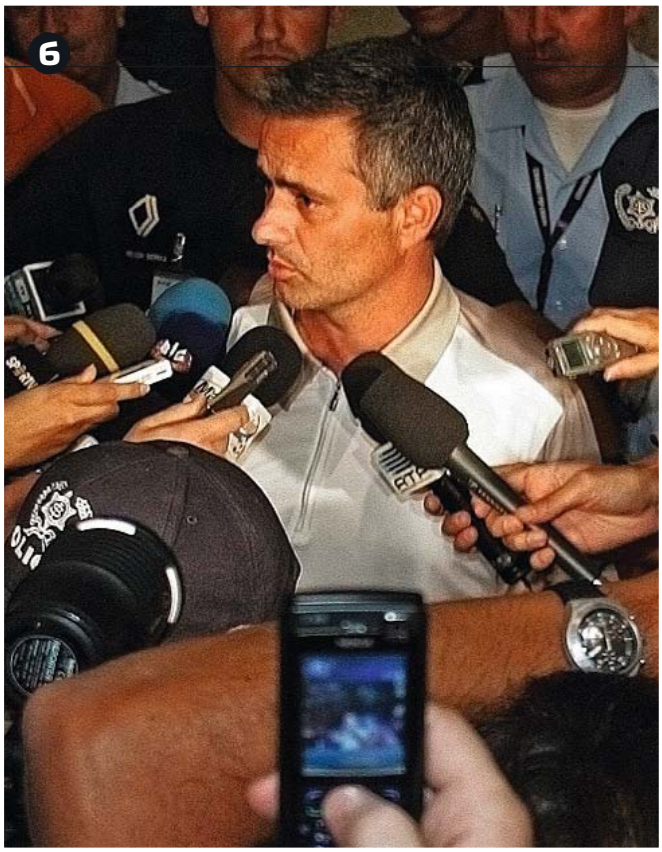
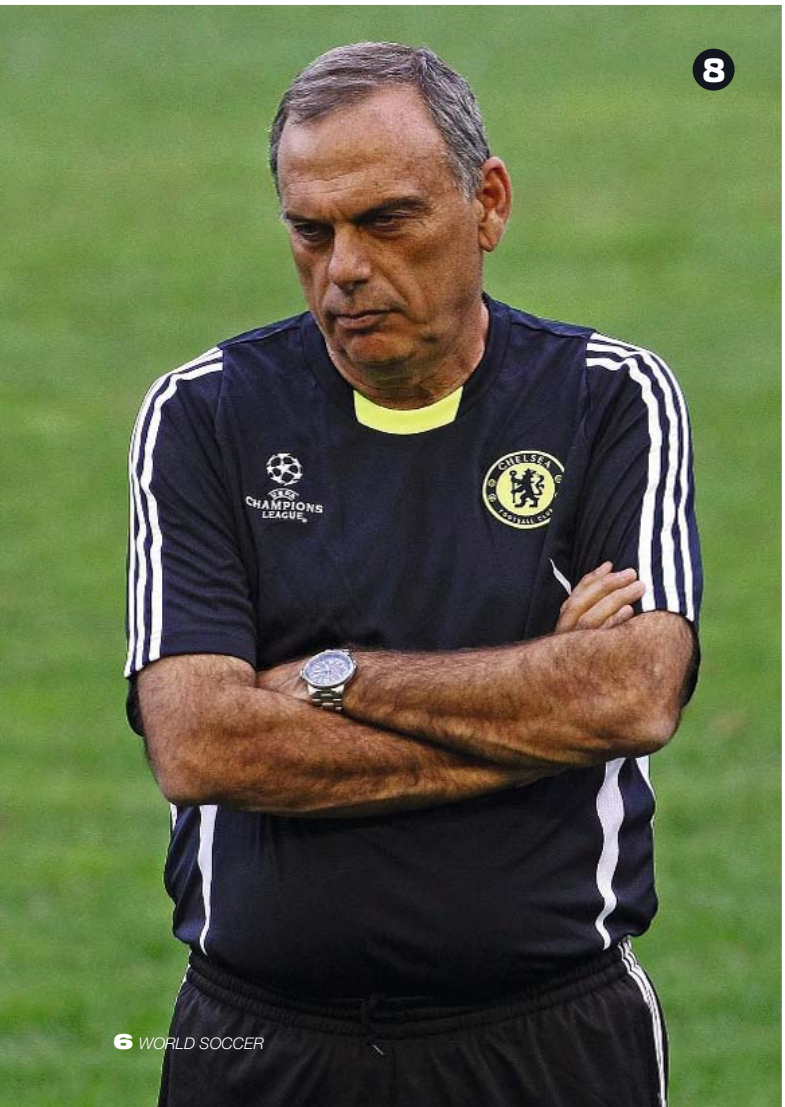
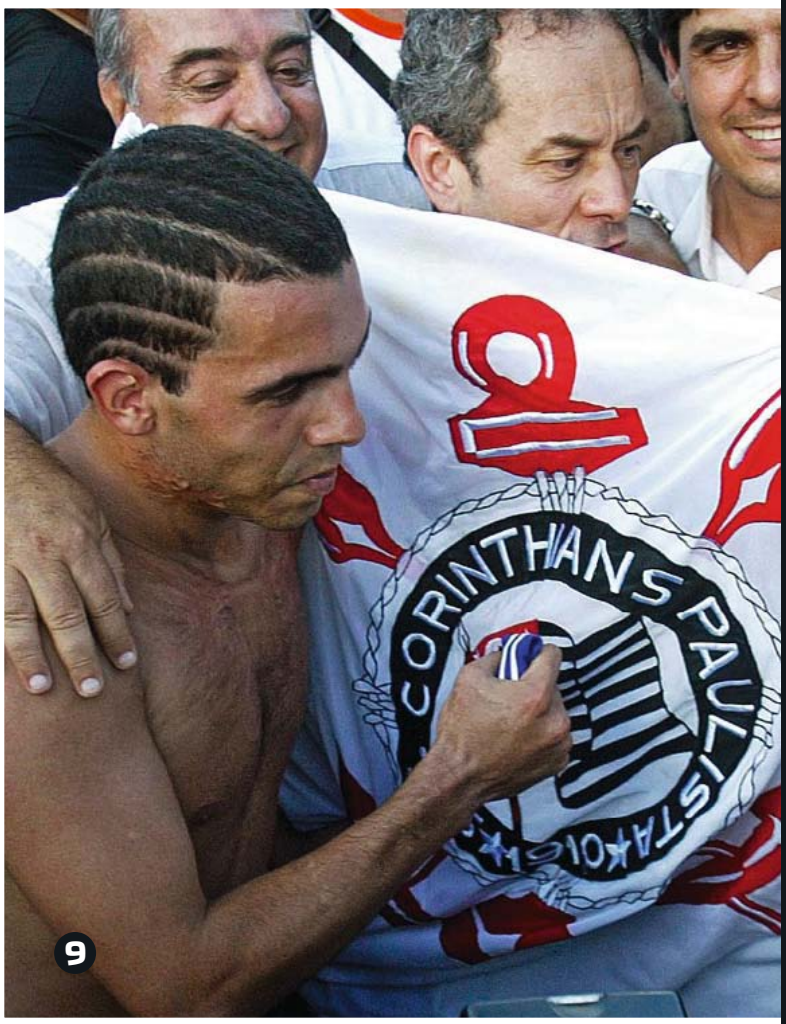



CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
CHELSEA


CORINTHANS PAULISTA

6 WHERE NEXT FOR JOSE MOURINHO?

The "Special One" is back in Portugal and contemplating his next move after his abrupt departure from Chelsea. More, page 32.

7 CAN ANYONE RESCUE JUAN ROMAN RIQUELME'S CLUB CAREER?

The playmaker scored both goals as Argentina beat Chile 2-0 in their opening World Cup qualifier but is out of action at club level as his dispute with Villarreal rumbles on.

8 DOES HENK TEN CATE'S APPOINTMENT AS CHELSEA'S ASSISTANT COACH MEAN THE DAYS OF HEAD COACH AVRAM GRANT ARE NUMBERED?

Ten Cate left Ajax to join the expanding Dutch contingent at Stamford Bridge. More, page 34.

9 COULD CORINTHIANS BE STRIPPED OF THEIR 2005 BRAZILIAN CHAMPIONSHIP?

Investigations have been launched into Corinthians' controversial 2004 deal with MSI and the club's title win the following year, which came after lavish expenditure on star players. More, page 30.

10 CAN ERIC GERETS TURN MARSEILLE'S FORTUNES AROUND?

The Belgian coach replaced Albert Emon after the club's disastrous start to the French league campaign. More, pages 21 & 86.

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LETTERS

Women's game deserves more space

I AM A 54-year-old Norwegian male and I have been a subscriber to *World Soccer* for almost 20 years and enjoyed some good reading. I have especially liked the more "political" views from writers like Glanville and Gardner and the fact that you have focused on the real and important matters in world soccer. But I want to express my unhappiness at one aspect of the magazine. In your September issue I couldn't find A SINGLE WORD mentioning the women's World Cup! My country just played Canada in front of a crowd of more than 40,000 people, more than many Premier League clubs can boast.

If you go to fifa.com you will be met by a very wide and serious coverage of the finals in China, with reports for every match. Norway's matches go live on the big TV channel in my country and even some of the other matches. The sports papers are also full of coverage.

What's wrong with the UK? Don't you respect women's soccer? England is at this moment in the quarter-final playing the USA! The other big soccer nations like Brazil, Ghana, Sweden, Argentina and Germany are there. Please, wake up!

Can you imagine an international athletics magazine not covering women because the fastest women in the world run a little slower than most of the men? Your only excuse would be if you had a special women's soccer mag, but I have never heard of it.

Tore Westberg, Norway

Well-watched...the Norway-Canada game drew a crowd of more than 40,000

■ Editor Gavin Hamilton replies: Tore, I understand your frustration. We review the women's World Cup in this issue (page 84), but we did not preview the tournament because we took a decision earlier this year only to preview the Copa America. The men's Under-17 World Cup, Under-20 World Cup and Asian Cup were not previewed either; instead, we reviewed them because we are a "journal of record". There may be lots of coverage on the FIFA website, but it is a FIFA tournament and FIFA needs to promote its sponsors. The interest in the UK is very low, I have to admit, and yours is the first letter we have received complaining about our lack of a preview.

Should *World Soccer* give more coverage to women's football? Have your say at www.worldsoccer.com/forums

FROM THE MESSAGE BOARDS

…on World Cup qualification

"We should stick to what we have now. What would the World Cup come to if we had 30 European qualifiers and Brazil/Argentina and not a single team from Asia or Africa? At the moment we have five or six serious contenders every four years, that's enough, and then add the teams that are progressing and the teams that are there to entertain – the Jamaicas, the Trinidad & Tobagos. Take them away and you kill the World Cup."
Posted by "Druryfire", October 1

"Whilst I doubt that global groups would really lead to '30 Europeans plus Brazil/Argentina' – would Belgium or Austria really fancy a trip to Ivory Coast or Paraguay? – there does remain the possibility that eventually a World Cup could feature only one or two continents. There is no way FIFA would risk three-quarters of the world feeling disenfranchised from the game's biggest spectacle. One need only look at what has happened to eastern European club football in the Champions League era to see how quickly interest and infrastructure can wane in countries who feel excluded from the top table.

A compromise (as some others have suggested) would be to combine CONCACAF and CONMEBOL, and combine Asia and Oceania. If the continental groups worked out in such a way that play-offs were required, then yes, make those intercontinental. Perhaps organise an eight-team, two-group stage in the World Cup host country in the January of the year of the finals. This would save on travel. One week, three games each, top two qualify for the finals, and the hosts get a useful dry run before the main event in the summer."
Posted by "AndyNeill", October 1

The entertainers…teams such as Trinidad & Tobago enliven the World Cup finals

"How about having around 20 automatic qualifiers from across the federations broken down something like three from Africa, three from South America, two from Asia/Oceania, two from North America and 10 from Europe. Then the rest of the sides who came close to qualifying can meet in a series of intercontinental knockout rounds to establish the other 12 or so qualifiers. We already have play-offs prior to the World Cup but this way we could have some exciting cross-federation pairings. The better sides should progress from this knockout phase, thus ensuring the quality of the final list of qualifiers without totally ruling out the prospect of a so-called smaller nation qualifying."
Posted by "Rotku", October 2

"In the current FIFA world rankings, the top 32 contains 21 European sides, five South American, four African and two North American. None from Asia or Oceania, but Japan are 34th, Australia 48th and South Korea 50th. If those countries were put in groups or elimination games with Ireland, Paraguay or Guinea, to mention just the bottom three of the current 32, they would have at least equal chances of qualifying. So, a global system of qualification would have a high chance of getting representation for all around the world purely on on-the-field merit and would end the debate about whether certain teams are good enough. And the fairytale stories would be deserved."
Posted by "Rogorn", October 3

"I think most of the above posts have some relevance. I like the idea of a 'repechage' round, comprising the 'near miss' teams from every confederation, to complete the line-up. This is an idea already in use for the qualifying rounds of the rugby World Cup. Let's face it, almost every confederation has a series of play-offs at the end of the qualifiers anyway, so if they were replaced with a repechage, then it wouldn't involve extra fixtures."
Posted by "JIMO96", October 7

Post your comments at worldsoccer.com/forums

ESM Team of the Month

European Sports Magazines

SEPTEMBER

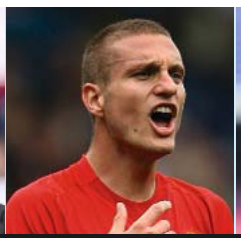
HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Magazines group vote for their first XI from Europe's top leagues. The players with most votes make the overall team of the month.

Sergio Ramos
(Real Madrid, 8 votes)
The Spanish international defender has settled well into his new regular role at right-back for Real Madrid and also weighed in with some crucial goals.

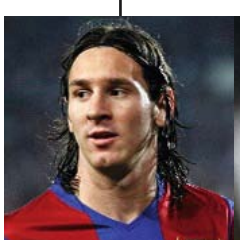
Rio Ferdinand
(Manchester United, 3 votes)
A key defensive figure as Manchester United got over a poor start in the Premier League to climb into the leading pack.

Gianluigi Buffon
(Juventus, 2 votes)
The Italian national team keeper enjoyed a confident return to the big time with promoted Juve as the former champions pushed Inter for top spot in Serie A.

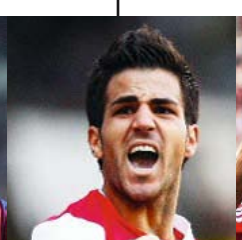


Nemanja Vidic
(Manchester United, 3 votes)
The Serbian defender produced accomplished displays as Manchester United began their Champions League campaign with two wins.

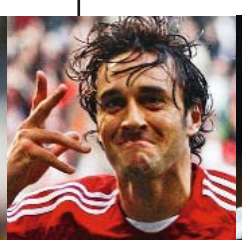
Eric Abidal
(Barcelona, 4 votes)
The French international defender was a key summer signing from Lyon as Barcelona attempted to tighten things up at the back. He has not disappointed.



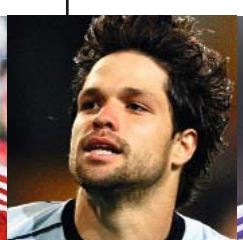
Lionel Messi
(Barcelona, 10 votes)
The Argentinian's brilliant form more than made up for the indifferent showing of fellow forwards Thierry Henry and Ronaldinho and the absence through injury of Samuel Eto'o.



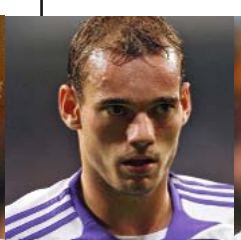
Cesc Fabregas
(Arsenal, 9 votes)
Still only 20 but the Spanish midfielder has been the key figure in Arsenal's powerful start to the league campaign. His contribution has included crucial goals.



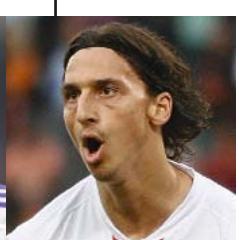
Luca Toni
(Bayern Munich, 5 votes)
With eight goals in his first eight Bundesliga games, the Italian international striker made an outstanding start to his time at Bayern Munich.



Diego
(Werder Bremen, 5 votes)
The Brazilian No 10 continues to sparkle in the Bundesliga, playing a pivotal creative role for Werder Bremen behind the two main forwards.



Wesley Sneijder
(Real Madrid, 8 votes)
The Dutchman, who inherited David Beckham's No 23 shirt on joining Real Madrid from Ajax, showed no signs of being intimidated by his new surroundings.



Zlatan Ibrahimovic
(Internazionale, 4 votes)
The enigmatic Swede was a key figure in Inter's confident start to the defence of their league title, scoring seven goals in as many games.

HOW THEY VOTED

A Bola (Portugal)
Quim (Benfica)
Miguel (Valencia)
Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)
Milito (Barcelona)
Diaby (Arsenal)
Fabregas (Arsenal)
Deco (Barcelona)
Sneijder (Real Madrid)
Messi (Barcelona)
Hugo Almeida (Werder Bremen)
Toni (Bayern Munich)

Sport-Express (Russia)
Julio Cesar (Internazionale)
Maicon (Internazionale)
Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)
Vidic (Man Utd)
Sneijder (Real Madrid)
Fabregas (Arsenal)
Messi (Barcelona)
Mancini (Roma)
Toni (Bayern Munich)
Adebayor (Arsenal)
Ibrahimovic (Internazionale)

Don Balon (Spain)
Casillas (Real Madrid)
Vidic (Man Utd)
Juan (Roma)
Maxwell (Internazionale)
Messi (Barcelona)
Fabregas (Arsenal)
Sneijder (Real Madrid)
Petrov (Man City)
Klose (Bayern Munich)
Trezeguet (Juventus)
Totti (Roma)

Sport/Foot (Belgium)
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Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)
Metzelder (Real Madrid)
Richards (Man City)
Abidal (Barcelona)
Fabregas (Arsenal)
Pirlo (Milan)
Messi (Barcelona)
Benzema (Lyon)
Toni (Bayern Munich)
Fernando Torres (Liverpool)

Fanatik (Turkey)
Reina (Liverpool)
Zanetti (Internazionale)
Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)
Ferdinand (Man Utd)
Roberto Carlos (Fenerbahce)
Iniesta (Barcelona)
Diego (Werder Bremen)
Altintop (Bayern Munich)
Trezeguet (Juventus)
Messi (Barcelona)
Adebayor (Arsenal)

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Casillas (Real Madrid)
Rafinha (Schalke)
Vidic (Man Utd)
Samuel (Internazionale)
Abidal (Barcelona)
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Adebayor (Arsenal)

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Toni (Bayern Munich)
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Sneijder (Real Madrid)
Diego (Werder Bremen)
Messi (Barcelona)
Benzema (Lyon)
Toni (Bayern Munich)

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

● Lyon skipper **Juninho Pernambucano** stormed out of a video analysis session of the team's 3-0 Champions League defeat by Barcelona the previous day, prompting speculation he could soon be on his way out of the club.

● French fast-food chain Quick has signed up **Nicolas Anelka** to spearhead its latest marketing campaign. The company believe it has a winner in the "Anelka Burger", a beef, cheese and tomato concoction with 39, Anelka's number at Bolton, stamped on the bun.

● A recent survey of puppy owners by a UK pet insurance group revealed that **Rooney** is the most popular footballer's name for their pooch. Other leading choices are Gerrard, Terry, Owen, Drogba, Giggs and Ronaldo. The breed with most dogs named Rooney was the Staffordshire bull terrier.

Quick bite...Anelka

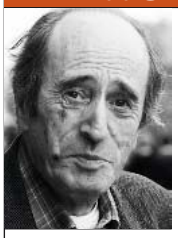
● Real Madrid president **Ramon Calderon** might think twice before visiting America again because on a recent visit to New York he was arrested after being mistaken for a criminal on the most wanted list. Spanish interior minister Alfredo Perez Rubalalcaba intervened to secure his release.

Down, but out?...Juninho

● Empoli keeper **Daniele Balli** apparently spends every night after a game chatting with patients at a local hospital. Balli says he normally drinks seven coffees on matchdays meaning he cannot sleep, so felt he might as well do something useful in the wee small hours.

● Every **Bayern Munich** player has his own trusty retainer to look after his top-of-the-range Audi. Their next job? To put on the winter tyres.

● Real Madrid goalkeeper **Iker Casillas** has insured his hands for more than £5million.



Brian Glanville

...on Blatter's redundant call for a foreign-player limit... the myth of Rafa the Tactician...Dida's worst of British... UEFA's tardiness on plastic pitches...and Joe Cole, free again

SEPP BLATTER has been showboating again. Not a word about the machinations of the intolerable Jack Warner, of course, but now a sudden and redundant blast about the prevalence of foreign players in domestic leagues. Blatter opined that clubs should be limited to no more than five foreign players. 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished, but the battle with the ineffable European Union, so bravely once carried on by Artemio Franchi as UEFA president, was, alas, lost long ago. The Eurocrats got their wretched way, as was inevitable. Euro law decrees that all workers, which inevitably must include footballers, of EU countries have the right to work in any other.

Franchi like an unarmed man confronting an armed foe, resourcefully and ingeniously held out against the might of the EU for many years, but when he died there was no way a mediocrity such as his French successor Jacques George was ever going to hold out. Nor did he.

In an ideal football world, of course foreign imports should be limited, as indeed they long were. But Blatter now has no chance of getting his own way, and he must know this very well.

HOW LONG can the myth of Rafa the Tactician survive? His Liverpool side beaten at home in the Champions League by modest Marseille and lucky to squeeze out a draw days later at Anfield against Spurs, Benitez is the evident heir as Tinkerman to Claudio Ranieri, now managing Juventus and bold enough to drop Alex Del Piero.

For me, Benitez got his two European Cup Finals radically wrong. In Istanbul in 2005 he was lucky enough to get away with it. Having put out against Milan a team that allowed Kaka to run wild and free, he saw Liverpool 3-0 down at half-time and apparently sunk beyond hope. At half-time, however, he belatedly came to his senses, put Didi Hamann on Kaka, and saw his team gallantly revive, breathlessly to win on penalties.

Low notes...Liverpool have performed poorly as Rafa Benitez has carried on tinkering

This year, he didn't get away with it. It made scant sense, again against Milan, to use Steven Gerrard as what the Italians call a three-quarter player, operating just behind the front line, and forcing him to turn to receive the ball, rather than rampage after it, which is his forte. In addition, it made no sense at all to keep the electric Craig Bellamy on the bench throughout, rather than launch him and his speed against Milan's elderly central defence.

Earlier last season, reporting Liverpool's league match at Arsenal, I was astonished to find Gerrard exiled to the flank, as has so often happened under Benitez, his place in midfield given, of all people, to Bolo Zenden, the Dutch international left winger. Arsenal profited accordingly.

More recently, the manager has persisted in using, both in Europe and in the Premier League, centre-back Sami Hyypia, so notably short of pace in his declining years, with goals given away in consequence. Against unfancied Marseille, who had been struggling in the French League, Benitez inexplicably put in young Argentinian midfielder Sebastian Leto, who arrived at Anfield only last summer and was all too plainly not yet battle-hardened. This at the expense of his vastly more experienced compatriot, Javier Mascherano, who did at least return the following weekend against Spurs, a game in which not only Hyypia but also his fellow centre-back, the usually reliable Jamie Carragher, were sadly vulnerable. You could hardly blame Carragher's lapse of form on Benitez, unless you believe that the manager's constant, obsessive, fiddling with the team is having its effect on its components at large.

IT WAS good to see even Dida's own Milan team-mates turn on him for his pathetic piece of play-acting at Celtic Park. Goodness knows, the Brazilian keeper, whose performance had been shaky indeed, though not as shaky as his histrionics, has cause to rue his games in Britain. You may remember how his abysmal blunder, years ago, gave Leeds United a decisive goal against Milan at Elland Road in the European Cup. Not that there is a semblance of an excuse for that deranged Celtic fan who slapped him.

> "In an ideal world, foreign imports should be limited. But Blatter has no chance of getting his own way, and must know it"

Splendid response... Joe Cole enjoyed his freedom against Valencia

WHY were UEFA so late to prohibit games in their tournaments on plastic pitches? Too late to save England from having to play their vital Euro 2008 qualifying match on plastic in Moscow, and losing. One had thought and hoped that such pitches, at least at the higher levels, had long ago been cast into oblivion. I remember years ago asking Franz Beckenbauer, when he was playing for New York Cosmos, whether he liked to operate on such surfaces. "Who does?" he pithily

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replied. George Best also told me how much he disliked them, finding it so much harder to turn.

IN TERMS of results at least, Avram Grant made a bright beginning at Chelsea, though whether this was despite him or because of him must be a moot point. He was after all very lucky to get off the hook at Stamford Bridge in the League against modest neighbours Fulham, who threw away at least two excellent chances to inflict a sensational defeat.

Victory at Hull in the League Cup was predictable and easy, but success in the big one, the Champions League tie in Valencia, was of huge importance, even if one may be a little unsure of, in Grant's case, the significance. One thing, however, might well be said in his favour: he appears to have released Joe Cole from Jose Mourinho's bondage.

For me, having watched Cole since his West Ham youth team days, he has been one of the most gifted players of his English generation, though essentially at his best in central midfield rather than on the wing.

Mourinho had a strangely ambivalent attitude to him. I remember especially a game at Stamford Bridge when Cole came on to the field, was deployed up front, and won it for his team, only to be damned with faint praise afterwards at the press conference by Mourinho for not having done enough in defence! Cole was modestly contrite, which was a little sad to see.

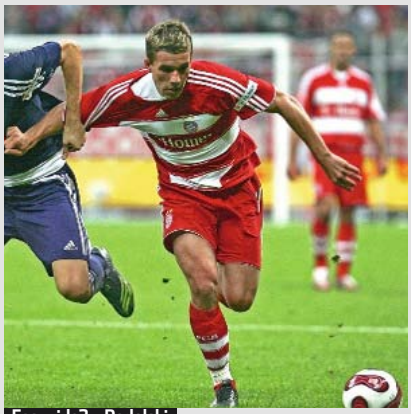
Subsequently, he has been in and out of the team, and when used it has almost always been on the wing, whence he has scored, it is true, some notable goals. He is also, alas, capable of notable fouls, such as the one he committed recently at Old Trafford, only and luckily to remain on the field.

But in Valencia, given – Granted? – a much freer role, Cole splendidly responded, scoring the first Chelsea goal then, with that marvellous long, outside-of-the-foot pass, making the decisive goal for Didier Drogba.

The Ivorian striker's absence through injury surely had much to do with the string of disappointing results in what proved the last days of Mourinho. I still believe that Mourinho, arrogant, flamboyant, a sort of mini-Helenio Herrera, had much to give Chelsea, as indeed he had given them already. And how right he was to resist and resent Roman Abramovich's fatuous obsession with a waning Andrii Shevchenko. Grant should stand fast on that; no use in flogging a dead horse, even if it once won many races. ●

QUOTES & NOTES

Who said what and why


Easy ride?...Podolski

"In the national team, he is molly-coddled."
Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge tries to explain why young Germany attacker Lukas Podolski has thus far failed to impress at the Bavarian club.

"We run the risk of ruining a fantastic championship."
Violence in the stands at the Torino-Juventus derby leaves Italian federation chief Giancarlo Abete depressed.

"The next time I give an interview it will be as the coach of my new club."
Jose Mourinho posts an uncharacteristically brief, terse message on his agent's website after his departure from Chelsea.

"He does take himself a little too seriously and I'm not fond of someone who glorifies himself."
Germany keeper Jens Lehmann on his old sparring partner Oliver Kahn.

"There are no good goalkeepers around in the world today. Most lack personality and courage."
Ex-Paraguay No 1 Jose Luis Chilavert obviously thinks it was better in his day.

"It was a grotesque piece of acting."
Italian paper *La Repubblica* on the delayed-action theatricals of Milan keeper Dida following his brush with a Celtic fan.

"If Mr Dumas took my place, there would be riots at every match. If I took his, it couldn't be any worse; his team are bottom."
French referee Eric Poulat exercises his right to reply after being blamed by Caen coach Franck Dumas for his team's defeat by Metz.

"I go out as much as before and am not going to change my behaviour."
Ronaldinho refutes press accusations that he is partying too much.

"Cisse aimed to hurt me and he succeeded. I'm going to sue him."
Besiktas' Brazilian midfielder Ricardinho speaks out after Marseille striker Djibril Cisse tackled him from behind in a Champions League tie.

Legal threat...Ricardinho

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

COACH TENURES

A league-by-league guide

39.9

ENGLAND

The average tenure (in months) of managers in the Premier League. However, if Manchester United's Alex Ferguson (in charge since November 1986) and Arsenal's Arsene Wenger (September 1996; pictured with Ferguson) are discounted, the figure drops to 22.7 months. Birmingham's Steve Bruce is the next longest-serving manager, having been in charge since October 2001.

19.7

UNITED STATES

The average tenure (in months) of head coaches in Major League Soccer. New England Revolution's Steve Nicol (pictured) is the longest-serving, having been in charge since 2002.

15.7

SPAIN

The average tenure (in months) of coaches in La Liga. Frank Rijkaard (pictured, with Ronaldinho), in charge of Barcelona since June 2003, is the longest-serving; indeed, only one other coach, Valencia's Quique Sanchez Flores, has been in charge since before the start of the 2005-06 season. Six clubs changed coach this summer, one fewer than the previous close season.

6.3

BRAZIL

The average tenure (in months) of coaches of clubs in the national championship. By mid-October there had been 35 changes this season. Mano Menezes of Gremio is the longest-serving boss, having been in charge since April 2005. Next in line is former Brazil and Real Madrid coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo (pictured), at Santos since December 2005.

17.5

HOLLAND

The average tenure (in months) of a coach in the Eredivisie. Groningen's Ron Jans (pictured), in charge since October 2002, is the longest-serving. Adrie Koster has been in (temporary) charge of Ajax only since early October following the departure of Henk Ten Cate to assist Avram Grant at Chelsea.

17.5

RUSSIA

The average time (in months) of a top division coach. Kurban Berdyyev (pictured), in charge of Rubin Kazan since 2001, is the longest-serving. Three of the bottom four clubs, Khimki, Kuban and Rostov, have changed their coach in the past three months.

16.3

ITALY

The average tenure (in months) of coaches in Serie A. Milan's Carlo Ancelotti is the longest-serving, having replaced the sacked Fatih Terim in November 2001. Roberto Mancini (pictured), coach of defending champions Internazionale, is next longest-serving, having been appointed in June 2004.

18.9

FRANCE

The average tenure (in months) of a coach in Ligue 1. Lille's Claude Puel is the longest-serving, having been in charge since June 2003. Jean-Pierre Papin (pictured) has been in charge of Lens only since late August, when he replaced Guy Roux, who quit just 61 days into his term.

21.4

GERMANY

The average tenure (in months) of coaches in the Bundesliga. The longest-serving is Werder Bremen's Thomas Schaaf (pictured), in charge since May 1999. Bojan Prasnikar has been in charge of Energie Cottbus only since September, when he replaced the sacked Petrik Sander.

Thierry Henry

The striker broke the French national team scoring record as Germany, the Czechs, Greece and Romania qualified for Euro 2008

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

THIERRY HENRY broke the French national team scoring record when hitting a late brace against Lithuania to put his team in a commanding position to qualify for Euro 2008. The Barcelona striker now has 43 goals, having equalled Michel Platini's mark of 41 in the previous game four days earlier away to the Faroe Islands with a strike in the 6-0 rout.

Bad weather meant the French squad arrived in Torshavn only three hours before kick-off, and they didn't hang around once play kicked off, going 2-0 ahead after just eight minutes, through Nicolas Anelka and Henry. France will qualify for the finals if they beat Ukraine away in their remaining match.

Scotland will also qualify from Group B if they beat Italy in Glasgow in their final game. Alex McLeish's side continued their remarkable qualifying campaign with a 3-1 home win over Ukraine, but then went down 2-0 to a youthful Georgia side in Tbilisi.

Four teams booked their places at the 16-team finals in Austria and Switzerland in the two October rounds (the top two in each of the seven groups go through).

Germany were first to make it after a 0-0 draw with the Republic of Ireland in Dublin. Four days later, the Czech Republic made sure of the other Group D qualifying spot when surprisingly beating the Germans 3-0 in Munich with goals from Libor Sionko, Marek Matejovsky and Jaroslav Plasil. The defeat was Germany's first in 24 European Championship qualifiers, stretching back nine years.

Greece secured their place at the finals with a dramatic 1-0 win over Turkey in Istanbul in Group C. The goal came in the 79th minute, Ioannis Amanatidis clipping the ball over keeper Volkan Demirel after being played through by substitute Giorgios Samaras.

Greece had beaten Bosnia-Herzegovina 3-2 in Athens four days earlier, while the Turks had managed only a 1-1 draw in Moldova. Fatih Terim's side must now beat second-placed Norway in their penultimate game to have any hope of taking the group's other qualifying spot.

The Norwegians lead the Turks by two points after a hard-fought 2-0 win in Bosnia with goals from Erik Hagen and Bjorn Riise.

Romania qualified for their first finals since Euro 2000 after wins over Holland and Luxembourg in Group G. Defender Dorin Goian scored the only goal of the game against the Dutch in Bucharest, tapping in after keeper Maarten Stekelenburg had palmed out a Paul Codrea header from a corner.

Four days later, goals from Florentin Petre and Ciprian Marica gave the Romanians a 2-0 win in Luxembourg, and qualification was ensured when third-placed Bulgaria could manage only a 1-1 draw in Albania. Holland are virtually certain of a finals berth since they need only two points from their last two ties, at home to Luxembourg and away to Belarus, and that is presuming Bulgaria win both their games.

In Group E, England's destiny is now out of their hands after losing 2-1 to third-placed Russia in their penultimate match. Wayne Rooney opened the scoring in the first half with a stunning volley but substitute Roman Pavlyuchenko scored twice in four minutes midway through the second half – first, converting a disputed penalty after Rooney had held Konstantin Zyrianov on the edge of the area, then stabbing home the rebound after keeper Paul Robinson had palmed away a shot.

Russia will qualify if they win their two remaining games, away to Israel and Andorra, while group leaders Croatia need only a point from their last two matches – against Macedonia and England, both away.

Sweden miss chance

Sweden missed a chance to seal qualification from Group F when held to a 1-1 draw by Northern Ireland in Stockholm. Olof Mellberg had given the hosts an early lead, but Kyle Lafferty scored late on. The Swedes now need only one point from their two remaining games, away to Spain and home to Latvia.

Spain are well-placed to also make it through after a 3-1 win over Denmark in Aarhus, which effectively ended the hosts' qualification hopes. The star of the night was Espanyol striker Raul Tamudo, called into the side after a two-year absence because of injuries to Davd Villa and Fernando Torres. Tamudo opened the scoring in the 14th minute, with Sergio Ramos putting Spain 2-0 up just before half-time. Substitute Albert Riera got the third close to the final whistle.

In Group A, Poland and Portugal are favourites to go through after taking maximum points from their October ties. Ebi Smolarek scored an 11-minute hat-trick for Poland after they had gone behind to Kazakhstan in Warsaw. Portugal had two games, both away – in Azerbaijan (a 2-0 victory) and Kazakhstan (2-1). The Kazakhs had held out for 84 minutes but succumbed to goals from debutant Ariza Makukula and Cristiano Ronaldo, before Dmitriy Byakov got an injury-time consolation.

Gavin Hamilton

Super sub...Russia's Roman Pavlyuchenko scored twice against England

Out on his own... Thierry Henry took his international goal tally to 43 after scoring twice against Lithuania

Jack Warner
CONCACAF chief in World Cup bonuses row

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

"HE IS A measure of reality for those who like bullshit," said Chuck Blazer, one of CONCACAF's representatives on the FIFA executive committee, in Jack Warner's biography last year. Blazer's description of his long-time friend and colleague is accurate, although maybe not in the way he intended.

Outside the CONCACAF region, Warner, the confederation president and a FIFA vice-president, is viewed as someone who has tarnished the game. But in the Caribbean and his homeland, Trinidad & Tobago, there is a different school of thought. In these parts, Warner is FIFA. Sepp Blatter may be president but Warner, while a close ally of his, is arguably the world body's heart – arrogant, ruthless and ambitious, although not terribly clever.

This is something that his former rivals – from ex-FIFA general secretaries Michel Zen-Ruffinen and Urs Linsi to humiliated, never-quite-was FIFA vice-president John McBeth – perhaps failed to grasp, all arguably underestimating the power of Caribbean football's self-proclaimed "Godfather" at FIFA headquarters.

By next March, the London-based Sports Dispute Resolution Panel should have ruled on a World Cup bonus dispute involving Warner and 16 Trinidad & Tobago players, including Sunderland stars Kenwyne Jones and Carlos Edwards, former Newcastle goalkeeper Shaka Hislop and ex-Rangers defender Marvin Andrews. If history is any guide, Warner can hardly expect a smooth ride.

Warner, who holds the post of Trinidad & Tobago Football Federation special advisor – a non-executive position specifically created for him – negotiated contracts with the Soca Warriors before the 2006 finals and promised half of all income and sponsorship money to the players. He later gave confirmation of this to the local media.

It looked a coup for the players, though they had negotiated without the benefit of legal advice with the veteran administrator, who is also a member of FIFA's finance, World Cup, executive, emergency and strategy committees. In addition, Warner chaired TT/Germany (2006), which was formed to handle T&TFF funds for the country's World Cup push.

Then, last October, Warner claimed the T&TFF World Cup income was just £1.43million and suggested that the deal with the players related only to profits anyway, rather than revenue, by deducting costs of £1.41m to leave just £20,000. Half of that divided between the players would give a paltry pay-out of around £450 each.

The players requested an independent third party to look at the books but were ignored. Then, after hiring a solicitor, they were branded "greedy mercenaries" and banned from international football. T&T have since fielded weakened teams, including at this summer's CONCACAF Gold Cup, where they finished bottom of their group.

Subsequently, government papers, uncovered by the banned players' lawyers, revealed that the T&TFF had World Cup income of over £13.5m. Meanwhile, an investigation by the *Trinidad Express* newspaper showed the T&TFF's auditor was also a TT/Germany (2006) director.

Mr Controversy...Warner is now embroiled in a dispute about payments he promised the Soca Warriors

Opposition leader

So will we see a more contrite Warner after the Sports Dispute Resolution Panel's verdict? Is FIFA attempting to distance itself from a possible wreck? Not even close. Trinidad & Tobago has a general election on November 5, and Warner is co-leader of the main opposition party, the United National Congress. In the unlikely event of a UNC win, Warner expects to be made prime minister. Furthermore, he promised local media that Blatter, far from being embarrassed, would personally endorse his election campaign.

In the past two years, Greece, Kenya and Iran have all been banned by FIFA for allowing political interference in their country's football. But FIFA does not judge itself so harshly. Last December, marketing chief Jerome Valcke was found by a New York court to have lied to a World Cup sponsor, a potential business partner and the FIFA executive, and cost the world body a £45m settlement to wronged party MasterCard. Valcke was sacked by Blatter but recalled less than six months later and handed the plum position of FIFA general secretary. The difference between Warner and his FIFA colleagues lies not in differing levels of integrity, but in the pretence of remorse. The ashes and sackcloth routine is not for him.

Last year he appeared before the FIFA executive, disciplinary and ethics committees to answer charges of dishonesty and flouting the organisation's regulations by selling World Cup tickets for profit. The crime carried a penalty of expulsion, yet Warner, who was fingered by the ethics committee and independent auditor Ernst & Young, escaped unscathed.

The T&TFF has steadfastly refused to allow government officials or anyone else access to its accounts. There is no explanation from Warner or T&TFF general secretary Richard Groden, who serves on FIFA's Goal committee, about how the federation could be bankrupt within a year of receiving income of £13.5m-plus. Blatter, presumably, has not asked. The question would be rhetorical.

Lasana Liburd

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

News of the politicians and power-brokers

Difference of opinion...Siegler

● **MARKUS SIEGLER** has quit as FIFA communications director. The former journalist had worked as a consultant for the world body and then directly under president Sepp Blatter before being formally appointed to head up overall communications strategy in July 2002.

Siegler, 49, said he had decided to leave FIFA "as a friend and on good terms", but added: "My decision to seek a new challenge was difficult and finally due to differing opinions about the future structure and direction."

Siegler was the second high-profile departee from the world body within months, after Urs Linsi stood down as general secretary.

● **SEPP BLATTER'S** recent insistence that FIFA will fight for the "six-and-five" principle (limiting clubs to fielding a maximum of five foreign players) was nothing new. The president has been saying as much for several years now, but top marks to BBC TV for whipping up so much responsive hot air to its own interview.

Blatter wants the limit to be introduced from 2010 but he has also acknowledged that this is a battle for UEFA to carry through since freedom of selection is part of European Union law.

EU sports commissioner Jan Figel said such a development would be illegal, as did G-14 and an assortment of leagues and clubs.

Blatter said: "You cannot consider a footballer like any normal worker because you need 11 to play a match – and they are more artists than workers."

FIFA and UEFA, of course, demand the full protection of the law when they sign up television companies and sponsors. Thus Blatter is always open to accusations of wanting one law for the suits, one law for the kits.

● **ALISHER USMANOV** has gone very coy on David Dein's likely involvement if the Uzbek businessman went ahead and stepped up his shareholding interest in Arsenal, now standing at 23 per cent (only Danny Fiszman holds more, with 24.11 per cent).

Usmanov said: "We do not want to be a hostage to any hostilities between David Dein [Arsenal's former vice-chairman] and the board.

"We are thinking now about how not to end up between a rock and a hard place. We will try to convince David to be less hostile to the current board and make an effort to pacify the board in its conflict with him.

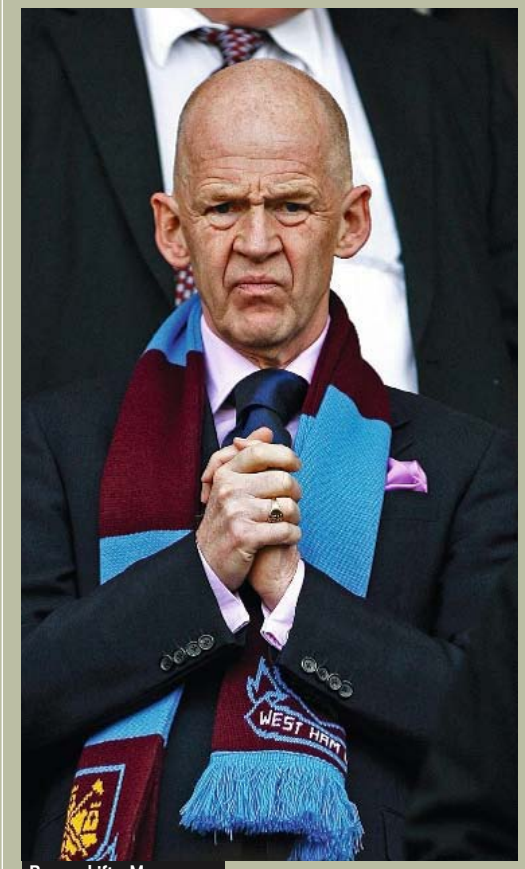
"I'm grateful to David that he decided to sell his shares to me and not someone else, and we made him our non-executive chairman [of Red and White Holdings]. But I don't want his personal relationship with the board to affect my relationship with them. I want to establish my own relationship with the board."

And then, when he has the power, bring back Dein, perhaps?

● **JOSE MARIA VILLAR** finally has a challenger for his position as president of the Spanish federation. Villar had come under pressure from dissatisfied sports minister Jaime Lissavetzky to call elections early next spring but was able to stall because, for one thing, no declared opponent existed. Now Mateo Alemany, who quit as president of Mallorca last year, has said he wants to stand on an anti-Villar platform and claims the support of various regional associations, though flagship clubs Real Madrid and Barcelona are apparently backing Villar.

● **EGGERT MAGNUSSON** has moved sideways at West Ham in a switch of control that has been interpreted as an admission of concern from money-man Bjorgolfur Gudmundsson. Magnusson, formerly Iceland's federation president, switched from executive to non-executive chairman to cede more day-to-day control to Gudmundsson.

● **MARC ROGER**, one-time agent of Nicolas Anelka, is fighting extradition to Switzerland from Spain to answer charges connected with the financial collapse of former champions Servette when he was president.



Power shift...Magnusson

GOOD MONTH FOR...

Afonso Alves...
The Brazilian striker ramped up his campaign for a transfer to European football's elite when scoring seven goals in Heerenveen's 9-0 rout of Heracles Almelo to set a Dutch league record. "It was one of those games you dream of, the perfect match," said Alves, who recently opted not to turn up to collect his Dutch player of the season award for 2006-07, when he was league top scorer, in protest at Heerenveen's refusal to allow him a summer transfer.

The previous best of six in a game was achieved by Dick Lammers, Pierre Kerkhofs (late 1950s), Johan Cruyff (1970) and Marco Van Basten (1985).

Magnificent seven...Afonso Alves

Juan Roman Riquelme...
The Argentinian playmaker has not played club football this season following a fall-out with Villarreal. But he repaid the faith of national coach Alfio Basile by scoring both goals in Argentina's 2-0 defeat of Chile in the opening World Cup qualifier, his first competitive game since the Copa America Final in July.

Double delight...Riquelme

German Denis...
The striker, scorer of 15 goals in 13 games for Argentinian league leaders Independiente, earned his first international call-up for the opening World Cup qualifiers.

Jose Manuel Rey...
Scorer of an incredible 40-yard free-kick goal for Venezuela that gave his side victory in Ecuador in the World Cup qualifiers.

South Africa's World Cup stadiums...
A visiting FIFA delegation praised the 2010 organisers for the progress they have made in the past year. "We were able to see signs of huge transformation in the host cities," said FIFA spokesman Alain Leiblang.

Striking qualities...German Denis (left) won an Argentina call-up

BAD MONTH FOR...

Playing politics...Dejagah

Ashkan Dejagah...
Germany's Iran-born Under-21 attacker whipped up a storm by refusing to play in a European Championship qualifier against Israel in Tel Aviv. "It's for political reasons," explained the Wolfsburg youngster. "In my veins I have more Iranian blood than German, that has to be accepted." The Iranian government does not recognise the Jewish state and forbids its citizens from visiting the country and its athletes from competing against Israeli teams.

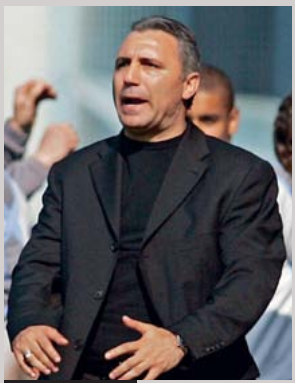
Missing out...Inzaghi and Del Piero

Alessandro Del Piero & Filippo Inzaghi...
The veteran forwards were left out of Italy's squad for the Euro 2008 qualifier against Georgia.

Simione Tamanisau...
The goalkeeper of the Fijian national team was refused entry to New Zealand for a World Cup qualifier because his father-in-law is a military policeman and New Zealand bars relatives of the Fijian military after last December's coup. FIFA postponed the match.

Abel Resino...
Sacked as coach of Levante after a 3-0 defeat at Zaragoza left the club with one point from seven games. His replacement is former Torino boss Giovanni De Biasi.

Hristo Stoichkov...
The Bulgarian was sacked by Celta Vigo after the newly-relegated team's poor start in the Spanish second division.


Exit...Stoichkov

Raul...
The Real Madrid forward was ignored by national coach Luis Aragones for Spain's Euro 2008 qualifier against Denmark despite injuries to David Villa and Fernando Torres. Aragones said Raul had competed in three World Cups and two European Championships but won nothing.

Snubbed...Raul

Eric Gerets
Tough-guy Belgian takes charge at Marseille

FRANCE

NEW MARSEILLE coach Eric Gerets seems to be a no-nonsense kind of guy, unlike his avuncular predecessor, Albert Emon. And the 53-year-old Belgian's nature, which has been described as both "demanding" and "volcanic", may serve him well at the Velodrome since the club have made a terrible start to the French league campaign.

Marseille's perennial problem is that expectations are way higher than their performances in recent seasons should produce. They have not won a trophy since the European Cup in 1993, when another Belgian, Raymond Goethals, was in charge.

But Gerets, who kicked off with a fine Champions League win at Liverpool before seeing his charges drop into the Ligue 1 relegation zone after defeat by Saint-Etienne, says he can handle the pressure.

"It's what drives me," he says. "I need the adrenaline that pressure brings to give me a push."

That motivation seems to work. His coaching record of five league titles with four clubs in three countries is impressive. He won back-to-back Belgian titles, with Lierse in 1997 and Club Brugge in 1998, two consecutive Dutch titles with PSV Eindhoven (2000 and 2001), and the Turkish title with Galatasaray in 2006.

"It's a bit far-fetched to say I can get Marseille to the top of the table this season," says Gerets. "But we should certainly be able to make a Champions League spot."

With only seven points in the bag after 10 games that sounds like a pretty bullish statement. Gerets is going to need all of his tough-guy attributes if he is to fulfil his statement of intent. ●

Howard Johnson

Bristling with intent...Gerets

A new revolution in goals... it's in the bag!

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YOU DECIDE!

CAN ANYONE STOP Kaka? As the leading scorer in last season's UEFA Champions League and architect of Milan's success over Liverpool in the Final, the Brazilian is the leading candidate to be voted World Player of the Year in our annual awards, now in their 26th year. However, Kaka's decision to sit out the Copa America may count against him, and the strong performances of Lionel Messi for Argentina at the Copa and for Barcelona this autumn also make him a strong contender.

Reigning African Footballer of the Year Didier Drogba will also attract votes after scoring the only goal of the FA Cup Final, while Cristiano Ronaldo, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Ruud Van Nistelrooy should come into contention for their roles in their clubs' league title successes in England, Italy and Spain respectively. And what about Juan Roman Riquelme, the star of Boca Juniors' Libertadores Cup triumph?

Carlo Ancelotti will attract support in the Manager of the Year category after winning the Champions League for a second time with Milan, while Alex Ferguson, who guided Manchester United to another league title in his 21st season at Old Trafford, and Arsene Wenger, after a decade of success at Arsenal, are also contenders.

Roberto Mancini's achievement in steering Internazionale to the Italian league title and Juande Ramos' feat of winning a second successive UEFA Cup with Sevilla also deserve to be recognised.

Milan's seventh European Cup win means they are in the running for the Team award, as are Boca Juniors for their Libertadores triumph. Sevilla's emergence as a major power in Spain and Europe should garner them votes. On the international front, Argentina may have lost to Brazil in the Copa America Final but their attacking style attracted many plaudits. But was there a greater feat in the world game over the past 12 months than Iraq's victory in the Asian Cup?

In the Young Player category, for those aged 22 or under on December 1, 2007, last year's winner, Lionel Messi, will be a contender once again, along with his Barcelona team-mates Giovani Dos Santos and Bojan Krkic. Arsenal midfielder Cesc Fabregas, still only 20, will attract votes, as will Manchester United pair Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney. Atletico Madrid youngster Sergio Aguero was the outstanding player of the Under-20 World Cup, at which Brazilian Alexandre Pato also starred.

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The moral dimension

Playing ball...the Pope talks "Progetto Soccer" with Ancona captain Giovanni Langella

The Vatican's Ancona "project" is part of a wider attempt to impose a new ethical code on the Italian game

PADDY AGNEW
in Rome

IS IT POSSIBLE for footballers to behave morally and ethically on the field of play or should we just resign ourselves to the "realpolitik" of a football world where bad language, diving and other forms of cheating, violence and drug abuse are the order of the day?

Such questions were at the centre of debate in the Vatican in early October, when Pope Benedict XVI himself gave his blessing to "Progetto Soccer", an attempt to draw up a moral and ethical code for football.

The code has been agreed by third division Ancona (currently top of their section) and the Centro Sportivo Italiano, a sports association founded by influential Italian lay movement Azione Cattolica 63 years ago.

To say the project's aims are ambitious would be an understatement. During a lengthy presentation in the Pontificio Oratorio San Pietro, close to the Vatican, we were informed: "The project is inspired by the need to find a new and advanced balance between human development and business practice in every aspect of the life of a club, by way of antidote to all the most questionable excesses of modern football – namely frenzied commercialisation and coaching exaggeration, a total loss of any sense of limitation and the dilution of the founding values of sport."

Progetto Soccer is aimed not just at the Ancona first team but also their youth teams and the fans. From now on the club, which went into liquidation in 2004 as the result of the fraud-related bankruptcy of their then owner, will be run along lines of total transparency. The players will be tied into an incentive payment system based on behaviour as well as results. Yellow cards, intemperate language and unsporting acts will result in payment being withheld, and offenders will be called on to do social work as penance.

The project also hopes to diffuse "an authentic sporting culture" among both fans and young players, while much attention will be paid not just to the training of apprentice footballers but also to their "social and moral education". Furthermore, the club hope to make funds and players available for a number of Third World charitable projects.

It must be stressed that neither the Vatican nor the CSI have bought Ancona, as was erroneously reported. Indeed, such was the excitement generated by news of alleged church interest in Ancona that various media speculated that this might be the first step on the road to the creation of the Vatican's own Serie A team. Even more absurd was the suggestion that someone in the Holy See was keen to form a Vatican "national" team that could compete in future World Cup and European Championship qualifying tournaments.

> "Such was the excitement generated by news of alleged church interest in Ancona that various media speculated this might be the first step on the road to the creation of the Vatican's own Serie A team"

Jubilee celebration

There is plenty of Vatican interest in football, but from a socio-anthropological viewpoint rather than a desire to compete. The Progetto Soccer idea goes back to the special Jubilee celebration for sport presided over by Pope John Paul II in 2000. On that occasion, the pontiff called for a halt to all the most negative trends in modern sport, arguing that it must regain its predominantly benevolent, educational role.

Benedict XVI has often repeated similar concepts. As for Progetto Soccer, however, this is essentially an agreement whereby Ancona have consented to implement a moral "protocol" in return for help with sponsorship and finance from business groups sympathetic to the CSI.

That is not to say, though, that the initiative does not have some heavyweight support. Presenting the overall package were CSI president Edio Costantini, Italian football federation president Giancarlo Abete, fashion mogul Santo Versace and Father Kevin Lixey, from the Vatican's

Decidedly off...UEFA was unimpressed by Dida's play-acting against Celtic

Council of the Laity. Giving Holy See approval was secretary of state Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone (a sort of Vatican prime minister), who sent a message containing the blessing and approval of the Pope himself. Earlier in the day, the Ancona squad attended the weekly general audience in the Vatican, presenting a team shirt to the pontiff.

Cardinal Bertone's interest in football is well-documented. Not only is he a highly enthusiastic fan, one-time regular radio match commentator and Juventus supporter, but he is also responsible for having encouraged the creation last year of the Clericus Cup, the Vatican's in-house football competition.

However, Progetto Soccer perhaps asks more questions than it answers. Just how do the well-intentioned men of the cloth, the CSI and the Ancona club hope to improve player and fan behaviour more generally? As one Ancona fan website put it: "The project is clearly a valid one, it will bring money to Ancona but allow us to have our doubts about its ability to transform the world of football."

Another speaker on the day of the project launch might have been closer to the mark when he described the plans to "clean up" football as nothing less than a "mission impossible". And when Ancona captain Giovanni Langella was called on to describe how the players viewed the initiative, he appeared less than convinced about the validity of the project.

On the field, world champions Italy need to remind us of the validity of their project. The *Azzurri's* Euro 2008 campaign will come to an unexpected do-or-die day on November 17 when they play Scotland in Glasgow. The Italians will almost certainly have to win if they are to avoid the embarrassment of failing to qualify for the finals. There is an ominous precedent: Enzo Bearzot's 1982 world champions failed to qualify for the subsequent European Championship finals.

Roberto Donadoni has been in the eye of a storm from the moment he took the *Azzurri* reins from Marcello Lippi last summer. A 1-1 home draw with Lithuania and a 3-1 defeat away to France in the first two qualifiers hardly represented an ideal start. And although Italy won seven of their next eight games, the one they didn't win was, perhaps crucially, at home to France, a 0-0 draw.

In their most recent outing, against little Georgia in Genoa, Donadoni's men were less than convincing, labouring to a 2-0 win. Georgian goalkeeper Georgi Lomaia helped the world champions on their way when he completely misread an Andrea Pirlo free-kick in the 44th minute. And from that point on, Italy played an inevitable containing game, only finally wrapping up the points in the 85th minute through left-back Fabio Grosso, who had been brilliantly set up by striker Luca Toni.

With Francesco Totti retired from the international scene and Alessandro Del Piero dropped, there has been much talk about a lack of quality in the team. If things do not go well at Hampden Park, Donadoni will surely feel the full force of the critics. "We've got a month to prepare ourselves for this game," the coach said. "It will be a great game to play in, at a stadium with great atmosphere. And we want to show people that we are Italy."

Milan's 5-1 thrashing of Lazio in Rome in the seventh Serie A round could be seen as the European champions' attempt to show that they are still Milan, having made a most unimpressive start to their league campaign.

Carlo Ancelotti's side had taken just seven points from their first six games, and followed up with a disastrous Champions League night in Glasgow when they were beaten 2-1 by Celtic and goalkeeper Dida seriously sullied his bib. The Brazilian had not only been culpable for both the hosts' goals but also produced unforgivable play-acting after being slapped in the face by a Celtic fan who had run on to the pitch after his side's second, late goal.

"Roberto Donadoni has been in the eye of a storm from the moment he took the *Azzurri* reins from Marcello Lippi last summer"

Two-match ban

Dida earned himself a two-match ban from UEFA, but looked safe as houses against Lazio, against whom striker Alberto Gilardino also managed to get off the mark this season with two goals. Ancelotti said: "This win came from two things. We desperately needed to sort out our very delicate moment and then, of course, I have some real quality players, and they showed that tonight."

It is true that Milan were greatly helped by the nightmare experienced by Lazio's 21-year-old Uruguayan goalkeeper, Fernando Muslera, who conceded a penalty and was partially to blame for at least two other goals. Yet Milan's quality was there for all to see and suggested that they could get their season back on course.

In the meantime, although clearly embarrassed by Dida's performance in Glasgow, Milan have stuck by their man. Ancelotti denied mounting media speculation that the club might recall keeper Cristiano Abbiati (on loan to Atletico Madrid) to replace the Brazilian.

For Lazio fans there was another conclusion to be drawn from the Milan game. Four nights earlier, the team had given one of their best European performances when drawing 2-2 with Real Madrid in the Champions League in a game they had dominated.

But Lazio are a workmanlike squad and light years away from the star-studded outfit with which Sven Goran Eriksson won Serie A. They simply do not have the resources to get results twice in four days against Europe's big boys. As Lazio coach Delio Rossi put it: "We are what we are and this is the squad we have. Clearly, Milan are much more accustomed to playing big games every three days."

The rest of Serie A has gone pretty much as expected, with champions Internazionale quickly taking control, all the more so with an emphatic 4-1 win at Roma, last season's runners-up and perhaps the only side who had looked capable of competing with them so far this term. ●

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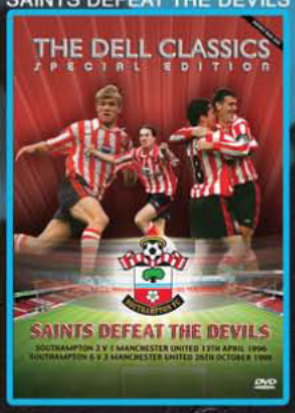

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Don't stop me now...Leo Messi starts an amazing personal goal rush by scoring in Barca's Champions League victory over Lyon

Messi mania

The Argentinian's eight goals in six games over 18 days allowed Barcelona to forget all about their troubles with Ronaldinho

SID LOWE
in Madrid

WHO NEEDS Ronaldinho when you've got Leo Messi? That's the verdict from plenty of Barcelona fans right now after the Brazilian provoked a mini-crisis at Camp Nou and the Argentinian resolved it, helping the team refind their form and presenting his candidacy for the end-of-year player awards with a string of outrageously good performances. Messi is only 20 but already arguably the best player in the world, and those "new Maradona" claims look less of an exaggeration with each passing day.

It all started in week four of the league campaign. Barca had managed only 0-0 draws in their first two away games, at Racing Santander, when Messi was substituted, and Osasuna, when he did not play at all. Although the Catalans had beaten Athletic Bilbao 3-1 at home in between, they trailed champions and leaders Real Madrid by four points in mid-September and the only goal of their paltry league tally that had come from open play had not even crossed the line.

But if Barca as a whole looked slow and uninterested, strangely lacklustre, Ronaldinho looked even worse. Despite getting the break over the summer that he had been pleading for after four successive close seasons taken up with international tournaments, the Brazilian looked no closer to refinding his fitness or form, and patience was wearing thin at the club. Then, on the morning of Barca's match with Sevilla on September 22 he mysteriously pulled out of the squad, claiming a "minor injury", which no one believed.

Minor injury? Major strop, more like. Ronaldinho had already been irritated by president Joan Laporta's support of Samuel Eto'o following the Cameroonian's anti-Ronaldinho rant last season and at having been substituted in three successive games this term. The Brazilian then awoke on the Thursday morning before the Sevilla game to stories accusing him of having been out on the town 48 hours before a recent match, thus breaking Barcelona's new code of conduct. Meanwhile, an anonymous member of the coaching staff admitted the player could "no longer outrun his opponents".

Suddenly, all hell broke out. Alongside a picture of a shattered-looking Ronaldinho with his tongue hanging out, the following day's headlines screamed: "Crisis!" Chelsea seemed to be reaching for their chequebook. More importantly, Barcelona seemed to be waiting for them to reach for their chequebook.

Nor did Ronaldinho seem all that keen to stay: he was furious about a sly boardroom leak concerning him and upset that a member of the coaching staff had talked about him behind his back. His brother Roberto, meanwhile, accurately denounced the situation as a "conspiracy", an attempt by the club to make sure fans knew Ronaldinho's lack of fitness and expanding belly was his fault, not theirs.

That was exactly what fans now believed. And that was why, most insiders felt, Ronaldinho did not want to play: he did not fancy a barracking from the fans after three dreadful performances, especially not against a side of Sevilla's quality.

Only it wasn't a crisis, because while Ronaldinho was out, Messi was back. The Argentinian had scored in a 3-0 Champions League victory over Lyon three days earlier and hit the opening goal against the Andalucians, flicking the ball into the air and swivelling to hit a perfect shot into the corner, running to the fans and performing Ronaldinho's famous surfer celebration. It was meant as an act of solidarity, but if anything Messi's display convinced fans that with him around it didn't matter if Barca did lose Ronaldinho. After all, Messi went on to roll in a ridiculously cool penalty to make it 2-0 (Frederic Kanoute scored a late consolation), and his superb performance had Sevilla coach Juande Ramos, never a man to get excited without reason, proclaiming him the best player on the planet. "When Messi plays like that," Ramos said, "there is nothing you can do to stop him."

Phenomenal goal

But that was just the start. Four days later, Messi tore Zaragoza apart, scoring twice in the first 10 minutes, one of them a phenomenal goal, and leading his side to a 4-1 victory. Three days after that he scored another superb goal after dashing beyond the Levante defence, as Barca won 4-1 again. He was again on the scoresheet in a 2-0 win in Stuttgart in the Champions League and five days later put Atletico Madrid to the sword, scoring another excellent goal in a 3-0 win.

Eighteen days, six matches and eight goals – as La Liga went into the international break, Messi was top of the league scorers' table and he's by no means a No 9. But then it shouldn't really have come as a huge surprise. After all, the Argentinian scored 14 league goals (17 in total) last season despite missing a third of the campaign with injury.

After returning to fitness at the back end of the season, he hit a stunning hat-trick against Real Madrid, and his too-good-to-be-true goal against Getafe in the Spanish Cup was a virtual carbon copy of Maradona's great goal against England at the 1986 World Cup (although, meticulously Maradona-esque, Messi emulated the Hand of God one, too, in a later game). In fact, since his return, he has scored 15 in 21 games. This season's run is no fluke, and he is also top of the player ratings table in the pro-Real Madrid daily *Marca*.

The Catalan press has taken to calling him the Messi-ah, Franz Beckenbauer described him as "a spectacular footballer with the rare ability to do things that few players can do – and do them at a dizzying pace", and Michel Platini said "watching Messi play is a real pleasure".

Understandably, Atletico's tormented side did not agree with the UEFA president. "It's fantastic seeing Leo Messi on telly," conceded striker Luis Garcia, "but it's not much fun seeing him on the same pitch." ●

> **"Fans believed Ronaldinho didn't want to play against Sevilla because he didn't fancy a barracking after three dreadful displays"**

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

The way we were...Carlos Tevez and Corinthians fans hail the 2005 national championship success

Out of the shadows

Investigations have been launched into Corinthians' controversial 2004 deal with MSI and the club's national championship win the following year

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Rio de Janeiro

THE FALL-OUT from the nearly-collapsed deal between Corinthians and Media Sports Investments has begun, with a police phone-tapping operation unveiled to the media, arrest warrants issued for two of MSI's alleged top men, Kia Joorabchian and Boris Berezovsky, and the resignation of club president Alberto Dualib.

In a further twist, Brazil's top sporting tribunal has launched an investigation into a comment from Dualib, who used the word "robbed" to describe the manner in which his team won the Brazilian championship in 2005.

The government has promised its own investigation, although football federation president Ricardo Teixeira has reportedly asked it to hold back, fearing such an inquiry could hurt the country's bid to host the 2014 World Cup.

The MSI deal, which attracted suspicion from the moment it was signed in 2004 because of doubts about the origin of the investment company's money, has been on the ropes for almost a year, ever since MSI's cash flow began to dry up. Joorabchian, who ran the Brazil operation, quit the country and failed to return despite later marrying MSI's Brazilian lawyer, Tatiana Alonso.

Initially, MSI invested lavishly, enabling the previously-struggling club to go on a spending spree for players such as Carlos Tevez, Javier Mascherano and Carlos Alberto.

Corinthians duly won the 2005 championship but it all went wrong the next year when they failed to win the Libertadores Cup. After that, Tevez and Mascherano were taken off to West Ham, and the MSI investment tap was turned off. In July, a Sao Paulo judge ordered the arrest of Joorabchian and Berezovsky to face money-laundering charges. The authorities believe Berezovsky, the exiled, London-based Russian magnate, was one of MSI's investors. Four Brazilian directors of the club, including Dualib, were also ordered to testify about alleged money-laundering and the international transfers of players. Shortly afterwards, the Corinthians board voted to break off the supposedly 10-year deal, although they still have to find a way of doing this without paying MSI the £12.5million fine for such an act stipulated in the contract.

To add to the intrigue, details of a federal police investigation into the partnership were fed to the media. The report contained details of conversations between MSI and club directors, players and other characters, usually involving sums running into millions of dollars. One reported conversation, between Joorabchian and former Brazil midfielder Ricardinho, appeared to confirm that the player was being paid out of the country, which raised questions about the tax situation. Another, involving the wife of Carlos Alberto, suggested likewise. Both players denied the allegations, Ricardinho blaming Joorabchian's poor Portuguese for the misunderstanding.

When Corinthians directors promised to launch their own investigation into Dualib's handling of the affair and into allegations he had issued false receipts, the 87-year-old president quit. His troubles were not over, however. Shortly afterwards, a conversation in which he talked about 2005 was leaked to Record television station and aired nationwide.

"We finished one point ahead, robbed," Dualib was heard to say, apparently referring to the advantage by which Corinthians won the title from Internacional. "If they hadn't voided those 11 games, we would have missed out because the rightful champions would have been Internacional."

That year the Brazilian championship was marred by a match-fixing scandal involving referee Edilson Pereira de Carvalho, who admitted taking money from a gambling ring to swing the results of matches. All 11 Carvalho had officiated were replayed. Corinthians, who had lost both of their Carvalho games, picked up four points in the replays, while Internacional had to replay one match they had won and once again came out victorious.

There was more controversy when Corinthians and Internacional drew 1-1 late in the championship. Internacional were denied a second-half penalty and had striker Tinga sent off after being given a second yellow card for diving, though referee Marcio Resende de Freitas later said he had made the wrong decision.

"We need to clarify the context in which this conversation took place," said Paulo Schmidt, a member of the sporting tribunal. "We want to know if it [the word "robbed"] refers to the games that were voided or the particular match against Internacional...or if it refers to a refereeing mistake."

Relegation zone

On the field, Corinthians slipped into the relegation zone. Paulo Cesar Carpegiani, the eighth coach of the MSI regime, quit and was replaced by junior team boss Ze Augusto on an "interim" basis. After a 2-0 defeat of Santos in his second match, Ze Augusto was given the job "permanently". But he was fired after four defeats in his next five games and replaced by Nelsinho Baptista.

There were even more comical capers at Botafogo. It all began in Buenos Aires, where they were knocked out of the Sudamericana Cup by River Plate. Coach Cuca resigned next day, despite directors' efforts to get him to stay. The team were pelted with popcorn and women's underwear by about 50 angry fans at the airport on their return to Rio. The following day, the first training session of replacement Mario Sergio was called off as more angry fans fought with police. That was followed by a 3-0 home defeat by Goias, a 1-0 loss at Atletico Paranaense and a last-minute 2-1 home defeat by Santos. Mario Sergio quit and Cuca returned – the season's 35th coaching change among the 20 first division clubs. ●

"We finished one point ahead, robbed. If they hadn't voided those 11 games, we would have missed out because the rightful champions would have been Internacional"

Corinthians' former president Alberto Dualib's ambiguous take on the controversial 2005 championship win

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

Precious commodity...Jose Mourinho is given a police escort as he walks through Lisbon airport on his arrival back in his homeland

Special delivery

Jose Mourinho is back in his native country, where his achievements have made him an iconic figure. But he is unlikely to remain there for long

THE LISBON POLICE force was on high alert, hundreds of people filled the streets and batallions of journalists armed with cameras and microphones were raring to go. The uninitiated may have thought a head of state was about to touch down at the capital's Portela airport; everyone else knew "The Special One" was coming home.

The news of Jose Mourinho's departure from Chelsea had caused surprise in his native land, where everyone had words of support for the coach. From winning the Champions League with Porto in 2004 to capturing back-to-back Premiership titles with Chelsea, Mourinho had always showed pride in being Portuguese, and the Portuguese people responded by showing pride in his achievements.

To understand what Mourinho means to Portugal, you have to understand the country's history. Not since the glory days of the 15th century, when Portuguese sailors explored the world and brought back riches, has there been a man who inspired the nation to believe they could conquer all before them.

Every Mourinho soundbite found its way into the headlines of Portuguese newscasts and newspapers, and every Chelsea match was broadcast on national TV. It was as if Chelsea were Portugal's team; everyone adopted them and always wanted them to win.

Of course, this identification was not only because of Mourinho. The fact that Portuguese players Paulo Ferreira, Ricardo Carvalho, Hilario and Tiago all played for Chelsea increased the nationalistic sentiment around the side. But when Mourinho left, it was as if Portuguese fans had lost a team, had lost a dream.

So why did he leave? How did he deal with it? Where would he go next? These were questions every football journalist around the world wanted to ask, but Mourinho spoke only to the Portuguese media. One of the main topics of discussion was whether he would consider taking the national team job. Portugal have been struggling in the Euro 2008 qualifiers, and current boss Luiz Felipe Scolari had just received a suspension for trying to punch a Serbian player at the end of a game in September.

The question did not get the answer Portuguese people wanted to hear. Mourinho said he would love to manage his country one day, but felt it was not the right time to take over. He said he supported Scolari and added that he wanted to take a few months off to rest and spend time with his family.

As for Chelsea, he said: "I have left on good terms and want the club to do well in the future. There are a lot of people there that I care about and will continue to talk to. I am happy with my work there and that I was able to leave my mark at Stamford Bridge with my trophies and records. It wasn't easy saying goodbye to the players, but I didn't want to leave without talking to them personally. There were a few tears, but it's normal. We shared a lot of good moments together and I will treasure them."

The 44-year-old gave no clues about his future, saying only: "My future will be my decision, and no one else's. I will take my time to make up my mind and announce my next job." When he does, we will all be listening. ●

PEDRO PINTO in Lisbon

Which way, Jose?

Portugal
Mourinho has declared he would like to manage the national team, but has no plans to do so in the near future. Even if the Euro 2004 runners-up fail to qualify for next summer's European finals, it seems he will not be interested in returning to his homeland.

Internazionale
When Inter were struggling, Mourinho was tipped to replace Roberto Mancini. However, the *Nerazzurri* have done well over the past two seasons and at present there is no reason to change coach.

Barcelona
Mourinho worked at Camp Nou under Bobby Robson and Louis Van Gaal and still has friends in Catalonia, but his derogatory comments about the team before a Champions League group match last season, saying the players were divers, did not go down well. Still, if Frank Rijkaard struggles this season, Mourinho could be the man to replace him.

Milan
Carlo Ancelotti seemed untouchable after leading the *Rossoneri* to another Champions League crown last season, but a poor start this term means he is on thin ice with demanding owner Silvio Berlusconi. If Milan stumble, Ancelotti could be on his way, and who better than Mourinho to rebuild an ageing side?

England
A clause in Mourinho's settlement with Chelsea prevents him from joining another English club this season, and the coach insists his next job will not be in England. However, there are likely to be offers from English clubs ahead of next season.

> "Not since the 15th century has there been a man who inspired Portugal to believe they could carry all before them"

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

This way out...the writing was on the wall for Ten Cate in Amsterdam

Ten Cate tails off

The Ajax coach quit to become Chelsea's assistant before he was sacked by the Amsterdammers

HENK TEN CATE has taken the escape route out of Amsterdam after what can only be described as a disappointing spell at Ajax. By moving to Chelsea to be assistant to new head coach Avram Grant, the same post he held at Barcelona under Frank Rijkaard, Ten Cate has avoided the sack from Ajax, his hometown club, whom he joined at the start of last season.

The coach had high hopes of winning the Dutch League when he arrived at the Amsterdam Arena but lost out to PSV Eindhoven last season, albeit by a very narrow margin – Ajax finished level on points with PSV but had a goal difference of +49 to PSV's +50. Ten Cate did win silverware – the Dutch Cup and two Super Cups – but the team's record in Europe was painful. Ajax twice failed to qualify for the Champions League group stage and this season lasted only one round in the UEFA Cup, defeated on away goals by Dinamo Zagreb, thus missing out on the group stage.

Apart from the poor performances, Ten Cate, who is often described as a street fighter, was not exactly what the Ajax board had in mind as the ideal club representative. Technical director Martin Van Geel claimed Ajax had been backed into a corner after Chelsea had approached Ten Cate before contacting them, and that the coach had gone to London without warning to hear Chelsea's proposal. Ten Cate responded that Ajax had kept their options open, and that he would finish the job if the club would not allow him to leave. But, given the team's poor form, it was obvious that Ajax were more than willing to allow his departure.

So what made the 52-year-old such a wanted man for Chelsea? Certainly, his coaching skills helped bring a lot of success at Barcelona – two domestic championships and the Champions League in 2006. Rijkaard, in only his second club coaching role, astutely appointed the more experienced Ten Cate, who had led several Dutch sides, including Sparta Rotterdam, Vitesse Arnhem and NAC Breda. Under Ten Cate's influence players such as Ronaldinho produced their best, and many of the Barca squad rued his departure. The coach was instrumental in developing the strategy that allowed Ronaldinho to have "only" an attacking role; he had no defensive worries because players such as Giovanni Van Bronckhorst were there to cover behind him.

Perhaps the best example of the high regard in which Ten Cate was held by the players was the response of former Barca midfielder Edgar Davids when asked what he had learned from Rijkaard: "From Henk Ten Cate, you mean."

Rijkaard and Ten Cate both have Surinamese roots, to which some people have attributed the pair's Brazilian-style laid-back attitude (Brazil borders Surinam). But Rijkaard was not best pleased when his assistant left for Amsterdam, even though he recognised that Ajax was a big opportunity. To coach a top European club and finally receive the credit he felt he deserved after success with relatively small Vitesse and Sparta was very important for Ten Cate. He received glowing praise from Ajax players such as Ryan Babel and Wesley Sneijder for the progress they had made, which helped earn them high-profile transfers to Liverpool and Real Madrid respectively. Grant, for his part, believes Ten Cate's qualities are just what the multi-millionaire Chelsea squad needs after Jose Mourinho's departure.

Emotional person

Ten Cate's problem at Ajax was that the job was much more than coaching. Ajax is listed on the stock exchange and the club think of themselves as a European giant. That means more pressure, especially, of course, when the results were poor. And Ten Cate is an emotional person who tends to blame the media or referees when something goes wrong in order to protect his players.

Meanwhile, Ajax, where no fewer than six coaches in nine years have not seen out their contracts, promoted reserve coach Adrie Koster to see out the season. Leading candidates to take the job on a long-term basis next summer are national coach Marco Van Basten and his assistant John Van't Schip, whose contracts expire after Euro 2008. Rijkaard and Martin Jol of Tottenham are the other names being mentioned.

The European book also closed for three other Dutch clubs – Twente Enschede, Groningen and Heerenveen (the latter after a humiliating 5-1 defeat by Henrik Larsson's Helsingborgs). Heereenveen at least had something to cheer when Brazilian striker Afonso Alves hit seven goals – a Dutch league record – in a 9-0 rout of Heracles Almelo.

Only AZ made it into the UEFA Cup group stage and then only just, 1-0 on aggregate against unheralded Portuguese side Pacos Ferreira. But that was the only good news from Alkmaar because the team took just eight points from their first seven league games, the worst start of coach Louis Van Gaal's career, and were knocked out of the Cup in the second round by second division Cambuur Leeuwarden.

AZ are struggling with their new status as one of Holland's top four (formerly a top three of Ajax, PSV and Feyenoord). Although Van Gaal will never admit it, departed strikers Shota Arveladze (now at Levante) and Danny Koevermans (already club top scorer at PSV) have been badly missed.

PSV also suffered an embarrassing Cup exit. They beat Heerenveen's reserves 3-0 but were disqualified for fielding the suspended Manuel da Costa. Despite several warnings to the club about the situation, the message never reached coach Ronald Koeman. "Absurd and scandalous," was the reaction of director Jan Reker. "This must never happen again."

That may be easier said than done since PSV have a history of administrative errors. The worst was forgetting to register Ruud Van Nistelrooy, who had recovered from injury, for a UEFA Cup quarter-final against Kaiserslautern in 2001, which PSV promptly lost. ●

KLAAS-JAN DROPPERT
in Amsterdam

> **"Ten Cate, who is often described as a street fighter, was not exactly what Ajax had in mind as the ideal club representative. Grant, though, feels his qualities are just what Chelsea need"**

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

> I gave Livorno all I could in terms of love and devotion; maybe I didn't receive the same back

Trailblazer

The Italian striker on life in Ukraine following his summer move from Livorno to ambitious Shakhtar Donetsk

IT'S NO SECRET that Shakhtar Donetsk pay big money to attract good foreign players – reports suggest you are on £2.8million a year. Was that the main reason for joining?
It's normal that money plays a part, but in my case I also had other reasons. I felt my time at Livorno was coming to an end. And I accepted the offer of the only club that made a concrete proposal.

You're the first Italian to move to Ukraine. Was the chance to be a trailblazer part of the attraction?
The main reason for my move was the fact Shakhtar were in the Champions League. But being a trailblazer was a factor, too; I've always tried to do things differently.

You were known for your loyalty to Livorno. How hard was it to finally say goodbye?
It's still hard, a strange feeling. The transfer hasn't sunk in yet.

What was your reaction to the response of some of the Livorno fans?
I'd have understood disappointment, but I can't excuse the anger that some showed towards me. I gave Livorno all I could and more in terms of love and devotion; maybe I didn't receive the same back.

Shakhtar president Rinat Akhmetov spent over £40m in the summer. Can such an outlay fast-track the club to the top? And do you feel pressure to be an instant success?
Shakhtar can make a major impact in Europe if they keep investing the money. As for myself, the pressure I feel isn't related to my wages but to my own character. I want to reach the top in everything I do. I'm not the only player who has been paid a lot of money; others have been paid even more.

What has been your initial impression of the standard of football in Ukraine?
They are certainly a step behind the Italian, French, English, Spanish and German leagues, but with the investment of various business tycoons, I believe the quality will improve, though it won't catch up with [western] European standards.

Ukraine has just two big clubs – Shakhtar and Dynamo Kyiv. Does that not create a barrier to improving standards?
Well, not exactly. There are three other strong teams now – Dnipro, Metalist and Metalurh Donetsk. They're growing at a fast rate, so the Ukrainian League is getting more interesting.

How have you been received in Ukraine? And has it been a culture shock for you?
I've been made very welcome. Leaving Livorno was a shock to the system, but I'm very happy in Donetsk. My family is not here so I feel a bit lonely sometimes. But I've been lucky enough to make some good friends, and the coaches are Italian and support me when I feel a bit down.

Were you surprised by your recent call-up to the Italian national team?
I was fairly surprised because in Italy it's said that those who play abroad have less chance of playing for the national team. However, if you look at my achievements it's not so surprising, because I've scored a lot of goals, and the fact I'm playing in the Champions League means I can be seen by everyone around Europe.

Do you think you were overlooked in the past because you played for a relatively small club?
Certainly, playing for a smaller club was not an advantage in international terms. But from an emotional viewpoint, I'd say my career has been fantastic because I played for the club that I love most.

The story goes that you were omitted from the national team because you celebrated a goal for the Under-21s in 1997 by revealing a Che Guevara T-shirt. Is that true?
I'd say I was penalised in general, not only in the national team.

Where does your admiration of Guevara come from? He seems an unlikely icon for a wealthy footballer.
The fact is that when I was a kid, I didn't know I'd become a wealthy footballer, and I grew up in an environment inspired by Che Guevara. Now I'm a wealthy and famous footballer, it's a merit not a defect that I'm still faithful to my roots and my ideals.

Is it true that you once tried to organise a match between Livorno and Cuba, with the help of Guevara's daughter?
No. This is one of the many legends you can read about me.

Are you confident that Italy can qualify for the Euro 2008 finals and that, assuming they do, you will be part of the squad?
I'm always an optimist. I have another important target this year, the Champions League, but clearly being part of the Euro 2008 squad would be important.

You have been critical of football in your home country. What do you feel are the main problems?
One is violence. People haven't been taught to accept defeat. In English football, when a team are relegated, the fans actually applaud them. In Italy, you cannot even leave home. Winning at all costs and by all means – this is the big problem that Italian football has. However, things are improving, and I'm really pleased about it.

Can Italian football clean up its act?
It will be difficult, but it's worth doing.

Plenty of Italians have now played in England. You are 32 now; is it too late for you?
I don't think so. If I could play in London for at least one season that would be the icing on the cake. ●

Interview by Dan Brennan

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

Thierry who?

The Dutch forward talks about Arsenal's exceptional start to the season despite Henry's departure and his quick return to fine form after a long injury absence

AFTER SUCH A long period out with injury last season, you seem to be playing on another level since your return to fitness. How do you explain that?
It has been a difficult process but a good one and I'm pleased with how things have turned out. It's often the way that when you are on song, you stay at that level and it's very hard to knock you off your stride. But if you're in a negative spiral it can seem that whenever you shoot it's always just over the bar or just wide.

When things are going well for you, even the shots that should go wide somehow manage to find the net. That was the way things were for me before the last World Cup. I did everything possible to try and stay in that vibe, but I also knew that it would have to end at some point.

At the moment I got injured I was playing the best football of my life, but then everything changed in a fraction of a second. I suddenly found myself sidelined for six months. After the injury, I approached every training session and every match with the attitude that it could be my last. I'm still very conscious of that and that's why my attitude these days is: make this your best match. Of course, you hope that nothing happens, but if it did then I want to have the feeling that I finished with a good performance.

Did you expect to reach such a high level so soon after returning from injury?
No. I discussed it with Arsene Wenger. I was keen to have a slower build-up to matches, and that served me very well. I started preparations for the season two weeks earlier than the rest of the squad so, physically, I was ahead of them during the pre-season matches. In the first four of those games I played for half an hour each time, and then I felt ready for a full match. That came against Inter, and I took a lot of satisfaction from it. I scored a good goal out of nothing and generally played really well. But what was more important was that the team played such good football. When you have that kind of positive atmosphere you can keep going for ever. It was fantastic and confirmation that with our really good football we can beat any top team. This was the answer we needed as a group. I'm fully convinced that we can achieve really big things with this group of players.

There seems to be a great belief within the squad at the moment.
Even during training there is an unbelievable drive and ambition to win, whatever form the session takes. Everything is so competitive, nobody wants to lose. This is a crucially important factor, something you will always find in a team that is capable of achieving big things. We can do that against Chelsea, Manchester United and whoever else.

Arsenal's potential has been there for some time. Are we now seeing it blossom fully?
It was always there but it has grown more recently because everyone realises that Thierry Henry has gone. He was good for 20 or 25 goals per season. So with his departure and because we can no longer rely on that individual contribution, we have to do it collectively. This is not something we have discussed as a group, but it is something that I feel everyone is aware of.

Arsenal have often tended to fare badly against more physical opposition in England. There is a sense that teams deliberately set out to give you a bruising. It happened again recently at Blackburn. What is your opinion of this type of English football?
Yes, that [the Blackburn game] was nice, really English! But, seriously, I

"After my injury I approached every training session and every match as if it were my last"

feel you can play hard and should play hard in England. You should prepare yourself for a battle in every match, especially when you go north. But that's not a problem. However, I do have a problem when I see that [Cesc] Fabregas is brought down and he's lying on the ground injured and someone "purely by accident" plants his studs on his neck. That is going too far. I am afraid that sometimes there are teams who go over the top, who take their definition of commitment too far.

How can you protect yourself: by using your skill or by fighting fire with fire?
You have to stay within certain boundaries. You could see it recently with Cristiano Ronaldo, a fantastic player, a player who should be cherished by English football. I don't want to see that within two or three years he says: "Forget this, England – I'm off to Spain where I can play normal football." OK, I know that in one match he headbutted an opponent, but I know for sure that he was continuously kicked. The opposition players stood on his toes all the time, as well as subjecting him to a non-stop barrage of swearing and provocation. Some referees do a good job and protect you but not enough. This isn't a plea for mercy: you can play hard against us, that isn't a problem as long as it's fair. Ultimately, the best response we can produce is to just play our own game. The best way to break the opposition is to score.

Mr Popular...Van Persie is congratulated by his team-mates after scoring the winner against Sunderland in early October

"In England, you should prepare yourself for a battle in every game, especially when you go north"

At the start of the season, especially after Henry's departure, many wrote Arsenal off because the team are so young. Was that never a concern?
Age or other things aren't an issue if everyone puts their foot in at the right time and works and runs for one another. We have a group here who have more than enough quality between them, and with the togetherness and good spirit here we'll be successful. There was a good example of that against Sparta Prague [in the Champions League third qualifying round], which was another rather physical match. For some reason during that game I realised it wasn't going to be my day. In a situation like that you have a few options. You can be annoyed and angry, and try to take out your frustration playing out aerial duels with a defender who is over 2m tall, or, as I decided to do, you can work hard for one of your team-mates – in this case the player who was behind me [Alexander Hleb], and help him to score, which is what happened. That situation shows that by working together and responding together to changing circumstances you can get results.

You are now the main striker for Arsenal and are already finding the net regularly again. How does the new role suit you?
I scored 11 goals in 23 league games last season. Now, I am finding myself more frequently in front of goal than I did before, when I was used more as a shadow striker, but I also have to cover more ground to get myself into the box, which is hard work.

Would you call yourself a typical striker?
I see myself more as an all-round attacker, whether that's as a striker, right-winger or No 10. In the national team, I've played in all the positions. If you want to be a good forward then I believe you have to be able to play anywhere.

But surely you must have a preference?
It doesn't matter to me, but [Holland coach] Marco Van Basten has asked me where I feel best. He wanted to know whether I was more comfortable on the left or the right. I told him that because I'm naturally left-footed I generally felt better on the right wing. That's because when I receive the ball my body is between the ball and the opposition, allowing me to go either inside or outside; I can take him out with a manoeuvre on either side, shoot, cross or dribble, whatever the situation requires. But it isn't easy for him given that he has five or six top attackers available for just three positions. For me, the only important thing is that I am a regular player in the Dutch team, it doesn't matter where I play.

Do you think Arsenal can maintain their good form throughout the season, and can you carry on subduing the teams that try to stop you playing?
We have to make a statement that we're ready to stand strong, that we won't be messed with and that we won't respond to abuse. What annoys me is that other teams are always complaining when we commit a foul, while often they are at it for the whole match. They should concentrate more on playing football and less on such emotive incidents. As for Arsenal's prospects, yes, even with a young side we're ready to take a step forward. And we already have some gigantic conflicts behind us. ●

Interview by Gordon McKerrow & Dan Brennan

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Jet-heeled...Adams

SADICK ADAMS
BORN: 01.01.90
CLUB: ASHANTI; COUNTRY: GHANA

Jet-heeled and burly Black Starlet attacker. No cause is ever lost and he never hesitates to shoot.

ISMAIL AISSATI
16.08.88
PSV EINDHOVEN; HOLLAND

Outstanding attacking midfielder of considerable poise, deftness of touch and vision. Of Moroccan roots but after much soul-searching chose to ally himself with his country of birth.

Poise...Aissati

Sublime ball-skills...Alexandre Pato

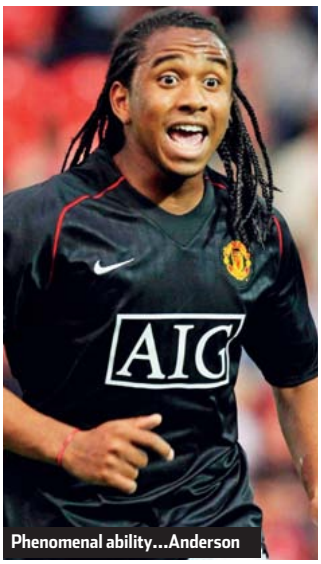
ALEXANDRE PATO
02.09.89
MILAN (ITA); BRAZIL

Wonderfully-gifted striker bought by the Champions League holders this summer from Internacional of Porto Alegre for

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

a cool £15.7million. Has pace, power, a good work ethic and sublime ball-skills.

ANDERSON
13.04.88
MANCHESTER UNITED (ENG); BRAZIL
Brilliant left-footed attacking midfielder with phenomenal ability as a passer and dribbler.



Phenomenal ability...Anderson

Cost Manchester United £10.7m from Porto this summer but has yet to be given a decent opportunity in the first team.

GARETH BALE
16.07.89
TOTTENHAM (ENG); WALES
Swashbuckling left-back who joined Spurs from Southampton in the close season. Absolutely fearless and already a master of the curling free-kick.

Swashbuckling...Bale

Taking the Barca limelight in his stride

GIOVANI DOS SANTOS
11.05.89
BARCELONA (SPA); MEXICO

"The simple definition of a phenomenal footballer is to be playing for Barcelona at 18." So said new Barca recruit Thierry Henry, and the seasoned French striker should know, having struggled to cope with the pressure of being at a big club – Juventus in his case – when he was 22. But Giovani Dos Santos seems unfazed by the weight of the Barcelona shirt. He has participated in almost every match this season and still plays in the same carefree way he did last season, when he turned out for Barca B in the second division.

The Mexican is very strong for his age and the team's fastest player over short distances. Coach Frank Rijkaard has utilised this speed and Giovani's dribbling ability by playing him down the wings, even though his natural position is as a support striker.

"Gio" does not seem to care where he plays but instead is simply enjoying his new status at Camp Nou. He is one of the few Barca players willing to stop and talk to reporters after every match, and his articulate, down-to-earth statements seem far too mature for his tender years. The Mexican talks about anything – from his status in the side ("I'm happy to be the team's first substitute, that's what I'm working for") to the situation of his idol, Ronaldinho, criticised for his recent lack of form ("There should be no debate, he has to be a starter in every match").

Unfazed...Giovani

> **He knows what he's doing. I'm going little by little. It's a dream to be in the team and I won't ever tell the manager how long I have to play for**

Giovani defends Mexico coach Hugo Sanchez, who was criticised for giving the youngster only 15 minutes on his debut

Giovani is now also a regular in Hugo Sanchez's Mexican national squad. He made his debut against Brazil in September and fended off criticism of Sanchez for giving him a mere 15 minutes. "He knows what he's doing," Gio said. "I'm going little by little. It's a dream to be in the team and I won't ever tell the manager how long I have to play for."

The youngster seems to represent the future of Barcelona. However, his future may lie elsewhere. In recent weeks there has been speculation that Chelsea are seriously considering a bid, and there may be some substance behind the tabloid frenzy. Giovani changed agents recently, ditching Mexican Enrique Nieto for Pini Zahavi. And the superagent's well-documented friendship with Blues owner Roman Abramovich is no doubt playing a part in these transfer rumours.

But that is not all. Despite all the fuss about him, there are people within the Barcelona set-up who consider Gio to be over-rated, believing him to be less of a prospect than the other *Blaugrana* starlet, Bojan Krkic. So the club may wish to cash in on the Mexican when the childlike Bojan develops physically and is ready to replace him in the pecking order.

Giovani has not ruled out such a move. "I'm very happy in Barcelona and want to stay here all my life. However, if at some point of my career there is interest from a top European club, I just can't close the door without listening."

An offer of around £20million could be enough to take him to Chelsea next summer. But, for now, his mind is elsewhere, with next summer's Olympics high on the agenda. "It would be great for me to be there," he says. "I really want to be part of it."

Martin del Palacio Langer

Lighting up Atletico after slow start

Global reach...Aguero was best player and top scorer at the Under-20 World Cup

SERGIO AGUERO
02.06.88
ATLETICO MADRID (SPA); ARGENTINA

When Sergio Aguero joined Atletico Madrid from Independiente in the summer of 2006, the *rojiblancos* proudly boasted how they had beaten off the challenge from Liverpool, Bayern Munich and a host of other European clubs to get him. But £17million still seemed a lot of money to pay for a kid who had just turned 18, even if he had been the youngest player to appear in the Argentinian League and even if he had been declared yet another new Maradona.

A year later, the outlay looked even more excessive. Yes, there had been the odd glimpse of Aguero's talent, but the youngster had not lived up to his billing.

There were persistent rumours that he was enjoying the high life, while coach Javier Aguirre seemed unconvinced by him. Although Aguero played in every single league game, he started over a third of them on the bench, and when he did play there was class but not enough to suggest he was going to be the star of the side. Just six goals, compared to 18 for Independiente the season before, told their own story.

But this season Aguero is different. Fresh from the Under-20 World Cup, when he was named player of the tournament and was top scorer as Argentina won the trophy, he appears more mature, more focused, more settled and no longer in the shadow of club icon Fernando Torres, now with Liverpool.

Aguero, played alongside new signing Diego Forlan and given the freedom of a central role rather than being shackled to the wings as last season, has been one of La Liga's outstanding performers in the early weeks. He hit five goals in the first six games and has been the creative fulcrum of a side that could at long last claim a Champions League place. The talent was always there, but now there is the temperament, too.

Sid Lowe

Eye-catching...Banega

EVER BANEGA
29.06.88
BOCA JUNIORS; ARGENTINA

Midfielder with superb passing technique. Caught the eye at this year's South American Under-20 Championship, and was then the midfield brains behind Argentina's Under-20 World Cup win.

Elusive, deft and deadly...Bojan

Instantly became a first-choice for Boca, where he has filled the space left by the sale of Fernando Gago to Real Madrid, and was a regular in the team that won the Libertadores Cup in June. Boca use him in a holding role, but his future is surely further forward.

BOJAN KRKIC
28.08.90
BARCELONA; SPAIN

Sensational attacker capable of the most outrageous tricks. Elusive, deft and deadly in front of goal. Has a Serb father and a Spanish mother.

BRENO
13.10.89
SAO PAULO; BRAZIL

The revelation of this year's Brazilian championship. Sao Paulo conceded only 11 goals in the first 30 games of the competition, and Breno is a big part of their defensive meanness. Exudes class in his defending and also in his forward breaks – he can stride forward with the air of a Beckenbauer.

Mean at the back...Breno

GERARDO BRUNA
29.01.91
LIVERPOOL (ENG); ARGENTINA

The boy wonder, who has been compared to compatriot Lionel

Shiny new product...Buonanotte

Ice-cool finisher...Chrisantus

Messi, stunned Real Madrid by snubbing their offer of professional terms. Instead, he moved to Liverpool after falling under the charm of Rafa Benitez.

DIEGO BUONANOTTE
18.04.88
RIVER PLATE; ARGENTINA

The latest product from the River Plate production line, a tiny, highly-talented attacking midfielder who is right in the club's tradition. The youngster is a gnat-like figure full of elusive movement and changes of direction, and with a wonderfully subtle left foot.

MACAULEY CHRISANTUS
20.08.90
ABUJA; NIGERIA

The top scorer at this year's Under-17 World Cup with seven goals. An ice-cool finisher with the uncanny habit of being where the chances fall in the box.

ANGEL DI MARIA
14.02.88
BENFICA (POR); ARGENTINA

Lanky, left-footed attacking midfielder who joined Benfica from hometown club Rosario Central after helping Argentina win the Under-20 World Cup. He has already earmarked Chelsea as his next destination. An unconventional talent – he plays in bursts and can be over-individualistic but is very hard to stop when in full flight.

FRANCO DI SANTO
07.04.89
AUDAX ITALIANO (CHL); ARGENTINA

Touted as a new Maradona in the English press, a laughable comparison because Di Santo is a beanpole centre-forward. Made a big impression in last year's Chilean championship and had a splendid Libertadores Cup this year, his aerial ability and skills on the ground proving a handful for even the Sao Paulo defence.

Air force...Di Santo

Unconventional talent...Di Maria

Explosive acceleration...Benzema

Lyon starlet with Ronaldo-like swagger

KARIM BENZEMA
17.12.87
LYON; FRANCE

New Lyon coach Alain Perrin has made several mistakes as the French champions struggle to reproduce their form of previous seasons, but regularly putting homegrown striker Karim Benzema at the point of the attack is definitely not one of them.

The 19-year-old, scorer of 10 goals in the first 10 league games, is reminiscent of a young and hungry Ronaldo – the same physical strength, explosive acceleration and glacial, almost insolent finishing. Whatever Benzema's choice of weapon – the audacious lob, delicate chip, full-blooded drive or crafty toe-poke – he delivers the coup de grace with a remarkable swagger. "Karim is playing on a cloud right now," Perrin says. "Every goal effort seems to be on target."

Since Juventus frontman David Trezeguet and France coach Raymond Domenech seem to have fallen out irrevocably, the door is now wide open for the Lyon youngster to establish himself as the national team's predator-in-chief, a role he looked born to when scoring on his debut against Austria last March.

Benzema, born in Lyon to Algerian parents, forced his way into the Lyon first team early in 2005, but over the next two and a half seasons spent plenty of time on the bench and on the treatment table because of repeated thigh strains. And when he did play there was much frustration with then coach Gerard Houllier for using him predominantly as a winger. "It's true that playing out wide has helped me develop my all-round game," he said towards the end of last season. "I've learned to track back and ration my energy. But the role I'm best suited to is centre-forward. I'm always confident of scoring goals. In fact, I'm obsessed with them. It's all I think about. I hope to stay at Lyon but want the coach to play me in my real position."

As it turned out, Houllier departed within two months, and Perrin scrapped the team's lone forward system in favour of a strike partnership. Benzema was suddenly in business, and to think that Lyon were on the verge of letting him go to Sochaux two years ago.

Nick Bidwell

Class above...Copil is the best young player to come out of Romania in years, according to his former coach Arpad Cserneczky

Hagi comparisons for Hearts youngster

DUMITRU COPIL
14.03.90
HEARTS (SCO); ROMANIA

Over the past few years, many young Romanian attacking midfielders have been dubbed the "new Hagi" only to fade away as quickly as they emerged. Will the country's latest boy wonder, 17-year-old Dumitru Copil – currently on the books of Hearts in Scotland – suffer the same fate? Those who know the teenager well, think not.

Arpad Cserneczky, the coach of Copil's former club, Atletico Arad, says he is the best youngster to come out of Romania for many years, while Arad president Alexandru Meszar insists the comparisons with the great Gheorghe Hagi are not just down to lazy journalism or over-eagerness.

"The kid does have similar qualities to Hagi," Meszar says. "He has amazing technical ability, vision and imagination and looks a class above the majority. But of course it's too early to conclude he will match the achievements of Hagi. It's all about luck in this game."

However, Copil, a gypsy from the Arad region of western Romania close to the Hungarian border, must have an excellent chance of making it big. Just as many of his family are talented string musicians, Copil is a maestro with the ball at his feet, never short of a trick or feint to fool a defender, always perfectly balanced, direct and quick to size up attacking possibilities. He is no physical lightweight either, able to ride the most uncompromising challenges and not afraid to go in hard for a tackle.

Such assets have made him the leading light of various Romanian national junior teams, and it was inevitable that his future would be as an emigre. Liverpool and Celtic were very keen to take him on, and with Bhoys scout Ray Clarke and first-team coach Tommy Burns going on a charm offensive, Copil admitted late last year that he was "90 per cent certain" of playing in green and white hoops. But the move to the Scottish champions would not go through. Hearts had come on the scene and in January this year they announced they had paid £125,000 for him, signing him to a two-year contract with the option of a further five.

Wisely, the Edinburgh club are not rushing the youngster, concentrating on letting him find his feet with their under-19 side. If they continue to handle him correctly, they could be in for handsome rewards.

Nick Bidwell

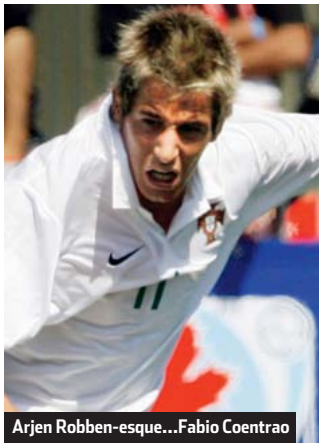
KERMIT ERASMUS
08.07.90
SUNDOWN UNITED; SOUTH AFRICA

Stocky forward, brimming over with hustle and bustle and not short of technical finesse. He has been likened to Wayne Rooney and dreams of leading his country's line at the 2010 World Cup on home soil.

Attacking threat...Fabio

FABIO
09.07.90
FLUMINENSE; BRAZIL

Second top scorer in the South American Under-17 Championship and Brazil's leading marksman at the Under-17 World Cup in South Korea – all from left-back. The range of his talent stands comparison with former Argentina captain Juan Pablo Sorin: as well as finishing well and offering an aerial threat up front, Fabio can hit the byline and cut inside to exchange passes. Set to join Manchester United next year along with twin brother Rafael, who was also impressive at right-back for the Under-17s.


Arjen Robben-esque...Fabio Coentrao

Box-to-box performer...Fellaini

FABIO COENTRAO
11.03.88
BENFICA; PORTUGAL
High-octane left-winger with more than a hint of Arjen Robben in his play. Recently signed for Benfica from Rio Ave.

MAROUANE FELLAINI
22.11.87
STANDARD LIEGE; BELGIUM
Superior box-to-box midfielder of Moroccan stock. This summer he bought himself out of his contract with Standard, then promptly renegotiated a new one with better remuneration.

GUILHERME
22.10.88
CRUZEIRO; BRAZIL
Has made a big impression this year at Cruzeiro, who are comfortably top scorers in the Brazilian championship. Operates behind the main striker, where he shows excellent vision for the killer pass. He has also got among the goals, needing little backlift to get off his shots. Like the truly gifted he can make the difficult pass look unhurried.

NOUR HADHRIA
04.09.90
CLUB AFRICAIN; TUNISIA
This charismatic midfield general combines silky invention, drive and abrasiveness. Skipper of the Tunisian youth team.

RABUL IBRAHIM
15.03.91
SPORTING LISBON (POR); NIGERIA
A latter-day Jay-Jay Okocha. Sinuous in his dribbling, packs a ferocious shot and is assured when spreading the ball around.

Latter-day Okocha...Ibrahim

DAMIAN ISMODES
10.03.89
SPORTING CRISTAL; PERU
Slight, lithe flank player who is right-footed but can also operate down the left. Has been fast-tracked from national Under-20 team into the senior Peru squad. His jitterbug pace and crafty dribbling skills make him reminiscent of Robinho.

Jitterbug pace...Ismodes

Exciting new presence on the Lazio flank

Imposing figure...De Silvestri

LORENZO DE SILVESTRI
23.05.88
LAZIO; ITALY
Lorenzo De Silvestri, the latest star in the Lazio firmament, is said to speak four foreign languages – English, French, German and Spanish – and that ability could come in very handy given that Real Madrid and Arsenal are among the clubs to have already made enquiries about him.

The 19-year-old right-back, an imposing presence at 6ft 1in and 12st (1.85m and 76kg), was the only positive note during Lazio's recent 5-1 home drubbing by Milan. He had already established a reputation for being a useful attacking weapon, and he underlined it against Carlo Ancelotti's side with a string of useful crosses, including the one that Stefano Mauri converted for the hosts' goal.

"I started off as a central defender but the best place on the pitch is on the wing," says the Rome-born youngster. "I like to run, get to the byline and get my cross in. At the end of training sessions I spend time with assistant coach Fedele Limone, just knocking in cross after cross."

De Silvestri, who has appeared at all age levels in the Italian national set-up, is a product of the Lazio youth system. After spending most of last term in the club's "Primavera", the youth, reserve team, he made the step up to the first team in April, making his Serie A debut in a home defeat to Fiorentina.

With his contract due to run out next June, De Silvestri is under pressure from Lazio to renew it. He wants to sign for three years, Lazio want him for five. If the two parties fail to agree terms, the right-back will not be without offers from elsewhere.

Paddy Agnew

The Seal has talent as well as tricks

On me head...Kerlon performs his trademark "dribble"

KERLON
27.01.88
CRUZEIRO; BRAZIL

Barcelona's Giovani Dos Santos and Anderson, now of Manchester United, were the two biggest stars of the 2005 Under-17 World Cup. But going into the tournament the focus was on Kerlon, the inventor of the extraordinary "seal dribble". The Brazilian flicks the ball in the air and runs while balancing it on his head, and can perform the feat at pace and while changing direction. But the move was not to be seen at the finals because Kerlon was sidelined by an ankle injury, and since then he has suffered a serious knee injury.

The youngster has not yet really made the breakthrough at senior level; he usually features as a second-half substitute for Cruzeiro and, by mid-October, had yet to score a goal in the championship. Even so, he hit the headlines again recently after performing the seal dribble in the big derby against Atletico Mineiro. The opposing defenders took exception, and one of them barged him to the ground.

A lively debate ensued. The press tend to see the dribble in the best traditions of Brazilian flair, but many inside the game view it as unnecessary provocation. National coach Dunga advised Kerlon never to unleash the seal dribble while his team are winning, and, certainly, he will have to pick the moment wisely if he wants to continue with his trademark trick. The danger, of course, is that the move is overshadowing the player.

In April 2005 Kerlon was top scorer in the South American Under-17 Championship, hitting goals from curled free-kicks, solo dribbles and combination play. He was also setting up chances for others from his position behind the main striker. So there is a lot more to his game than the seal dribble. Can he take the full variety of his attacking skills into senior football or is he destined to remain a YouTube curiosity?

Tim Vickery

Bundesliga-bound...Kroos

TONI KROOS
04.01.90
BAYERN MUNICH; GERMANY

Playmaker and goalscorer voted best player at this year's Under-17 World Cup. Certain to be the next big thing in the Bundesliga. Could well graduate to the Bayern first team after Christmas.

Ups and downs...Lulinha (right)

LULINHA
10.04.90
CORINTHIANS; BRAZIL

Attacking midfielder who has already experienced the ups and downs of football. Gave a master class in calm, controlled finishing at the South American Under-17 Championship, accumulating a tournament record 12 goals. But then came up short in both the Pan-American Games and the Under-17 World Cup, and also found senior football hard going when pitched into Corinthians' struggle against relegation.

SAPOL MANI
05.06.91
MARANATHA; TOGO

Versatile midfielder who puts in a full shift as a ball-winner and still finds the time to surge forward, create and go for goal.

JUAN MANUEL MATA
28.04.88
VALENCIA; SPAIN

Diminutive attacker dubbed the next Raul. Previously with Real Madrid, he first made his name with a starring role in Spain's triumph at the European Under-19 Championship.

Forward surges...Mani

"The next Raul"...Mata

CRISTIAN NAZARITH
13.08.90
AMERICA CALI; COLOMBIA
Well-built centre-forward with a prodigious leap that makes him especially dangerous in the air. He was Colombia's star at this year's Under-17 World Cup and has been an instant goalscoring hit when pitched into the Colombian first division.

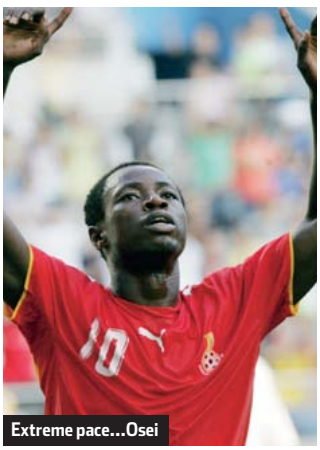
Prodigious leap...Nazarith

Asset-rich...Opare

RANSFORD OSEI
05.12.90
KESSEBEN; GHANA
Livewire front-runner whose extreme pace has defenders backing off in panic. Second top scorer with six goals at this year's Under-17 World Cup, but can lack a little composure when put through.

AARON NIGUEZ
26.04.89
VALENCIA; SPAIN
The fact that Chelsea, Liverpool and Barcelona would love to enroll him says it all. Two-footed, subtle, elegant.

DANIEL OPARE
18.10.90
ASHANTI; GHANA
Right-back who appears to have all the assets: the pace and crossing ability when on the overlap, bite in the tackle, sound positioning and a level temperament.


Extreme pace...Osei

In demand...Niguez

Midfield creator...Merida

Another Spanish coup for Arsenal

FRAN MERIDA
04.03.90
ARSENAL (ENG); SPAIN
Cesc Fabregas is not the only teenager Arsenal have managed to snatch from Barcelona. Early in 2006, Arsene Wenger and his merry band of informants again capitalised on a Camp Nou contractual blunder to spirit midfield creator Fran Merida away to north London.

Barca screamed blue murder for the second time in three years, but once again they had been guilty of taking for granted the talent reared at their La Masia academy and failing to make their youngsters feel wanted. Like Fabregas, Merida came to the conclusion that the future was far brighter at Arsenal than on his Catalan doorstep.

Merida, a fabulously-inventive, two-footed schemer with a nose for goal, featured prominently for various Barcelona junior sides. But by the summer of 2005, at the age of 15, he was not at all certain that the club saw him as someone for the long-term and consulted agent Joseba Diaz about trying his luck elsewhere. What could Merida lose? He had no shortage of admirers, including Manchester United, Arsenal and Real Madrid, and had a convenient escape route.

Two years earlier, his parents had signed a contract of affiliation with Barcelona on the youngster's behalf, but it transpired that the document was not legally binding. No club director had bothered to put his name to it, and thus Merida was free to walk away. Wenger, informed of developments by his man in Spain, Francis Cagigal, immediately set about reeling Merida in.

A professional deal was agreed and all that remained was a touch of cloak and dagger. Since Merida could not sign for an English club before his 16th birthday, he would spend the intervening four months hidden away in the Basque country. Only when the cake and candles arrived could he head for Arsenal, for whom he made his first-team debut in a League Cup tie against Newcastle in September.

A Spanish court ruled recently that Arsenal should pay Barca £2.1million in compensation, but the Catalans are still sore about losing another youngster to north London. As Merida proved in helping Spain finish runners-up at the recent Under-17 World Cup, he could quite easily be gracing the Premiership some time soon.

Nick Bidwell

Third-generation keeper goes Dutch

Top Twente?...Mihaylov is battling for the No 1 jersey at the Dutch club

NIKOLAY MIHAYLOV
28.06.88
TWENTE ENSCHEDE (HOL); BULGARIA

Nikolay Mihaylov was always destined to be a goalkeeper. His grandfather, Bisser, starred between the posts for Levski Sofia in the 1960s, as did his father Borislav, who also played a record 105 games for Bulgaria and featured in the national team's finest moment, reaching the 1994 World Cup semi-finals.

Nikolay also made his name at Levski and his fine form earned him a regular slot in the Bulgarian Under-21 side. Yet his time at the club was not without blemishes. Coach Stanimir Stoilov was critical of the youngster's partying lifestyle, while Mihaylov made a disastrous gaffe during a Champions League defeat to Werder Bremen, miscontrolling a back-pass and allowing the ball to roll over the line.

Overnight the youngster found himself cast in the role of whipping boy, and sections of the Levski crowd never missed an opportunity to jeer him and suggest he owed his place at the club to the influence of his father, who by now had become federation president.

Last spring, Nikolay was heavily tipped to move to Fiorentina to serve as understudy to Frenchman Sebastien Frey. But instead of a new home in Tuscany, his signed a three-year contract with Liverpool. However, he would be on Merseyside only briefly. The UK Home Office deemed his one-cap senior international record not worthy of a work permit so Liverpool sent him on loan to Dutch club Twente Enschede, where he will batttle for the starting spot with Sander Boschker.

Nick Bidwell

Like a young Rivaldo...Renato Augusto

MESUT OZIL
15.10.88
SCHALKE; GERMANY

Born in the Ruhr to Turkish parents, he is a ball-playing, old-school No 10, brimming over with all manner of audacious tricks.

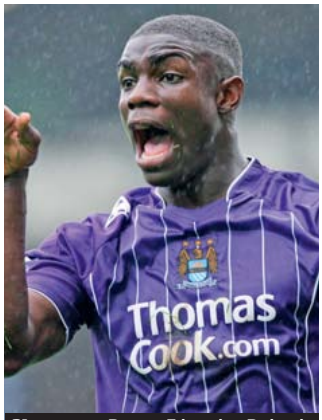
Old-school No 10...Ozil

RENATO AUGUSTO
08.02.88
FLAMENGO; BRAZIL

Last year's revelation in Brazilian football who, predictably enough, is not finding things easy growing up in public while carrying the expectations of the country's most popular club. The talent is still there, though; he is reminiscent of a young Rivaldo, though a right-footed version.

MICAH RICHARDS
24.06.88
MANCHESTER CITY; ENGLAND

A Duncan Edwards for the 21st century. Athletic, quick and immensely powerful, he excels at right-back but is even better at the heart of the defence.



21st-century Duncan Edwards...Richards

ANDREA RUSSOTTO
25.05.88
TREVISO; ITALY

The nearest thing the Italians have to Roberto Baggio at the moment, a true "fantasista". Incredibly, he was discarded by Lazio a few years ago.

HENRI SAIVET
26.10.90
BORDEAUX; FRANCE

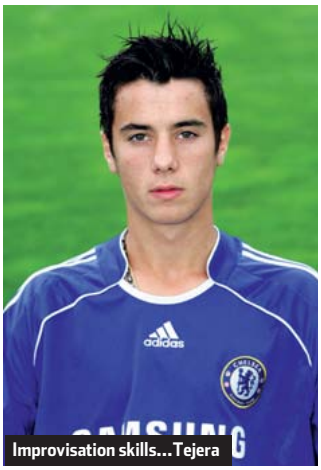
He is being mentioned in the same breath as Thierry Henry,

Feline grace...Saivet

and while the comparison may be somewhat premature, the French Under-17 wide man really does play with similar speed and feline grace.

ALEXIS SANCHEZ
19.12.88
RIVER PLATE (ARG); CHILE
Devilishly talented little winger, a magnificent dribbler who is full of tricks and has the courage to use them where they

Devilishly good...Sanchez


Improvisation skills...Tejera

are most effective, on the edge of the area. He can also combine well, playing quick passes to his strike partner. Started with Cobreloa in his native Chile and was picked up by Udinese in Italy, who loaned him out first to Colo Colo back in his homeland, where he enjoyed a terrific year, and then to River Plate, where his excellent start has been interrupted by a knee injury.

MAREK SUCHY
28.03.88
SLAVIA PRAGUE; CZECH REPUBLIC
Voted the Czech revelation of 2006, this wonderful centre-back can also play in a number of midfield roles. A key figure in the Czech side who were runners-up at this year's Under-20 World Cup.

SERGIO TEJERA
28.05.90
CHELSEA (ENG); SPAIN
Left-footed midfielder blessed with exquisite technique and a rare ability to improvise. Chelsea signed him from Espanyol, beating Manchester United, Tottenham, Real Madrid and Barcelona to the punch.

Czech revelation...Suchy

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SEGA

Croatia not Swiss role for blond bombshell

Highly conspicuous...Rakitic is one of Europe's most promising players

IVAN RAKITIC
10.03.88
SCHALKE (GER); CROATIA

Earlier this year Switzerland lost the services of one of Europe's most promising players when midfielder Ivan Rakitic opted to play for Croatia, his parents' homeland, rather than the country where he was born and brought up. And the youngster, who had played for the Swiss Under-16, 17 and 19 sides, was subjected to death threats because of his decision.

But Rakitic's future with Croatia is bright. His finesse, penchant for spectacular goals and dead-ball expertise should help Slaven Bilic's youthful and vibrant side reach new heights, starting with Euro 2008.

The midfielder, a graduate of Basle's youth system and named Switzerland's young player of the 2006-07 season, had such big clubs as Barcelona and Milan lining up to sign him this summer. But while Rakitic admits he was sorely tempted to head to Camp Nou or the San Siro, he and his agent decided, on reflection, that the wisest step was to sign with German outfit Schalke. On the face of it, the move ticked all the boxes. He would be playing at a higher standard in the Bundesliga, there was less danger of him falling victim to squad rotation and he spoke the language.

"Schalke are a massive club with a huge following and the ambition to fight for the league title and compete in the Champions League," said Rakitic, who marked his debut for the Ruhr club with an equaliser of poise and flair away to champions Stuttgart in August. "I know I've made a good choice of club, that I'll learn and develop here."

German clubs do not have a history of splashing out on a whim, £2.9million in this case. Schalke know they have a fine prospect in their midst, conspicuous both in talent and his blond hair.

Nick Bidwell

Redoubtable opponent...Traore

ABDOU TRAORE
28.12.88
ROSENBORG (NOR); BURKINA FASO

Extremely lively winger whose low centre of gravity, rich palette of skills and team ethic makes him a redoubtable opponent. Joined Rosenborg from Raja Casablanca earlier this year.

Ultra-confident...Van der Wiel

GREGORY VAN DER WIEL
03.02.88
AJAX; HOLLAND

The Amsterdammers have again unearthed an ultra-confident kid of huge potential. Equally competent as libero or stopper and pushes forward intelligently.

Thoroughbred...Vela

CARLOS VELA
01.03.89
OSASUNA (SPA); MEXICO

Thoroughbred young marksman who first came to prominence when helping Mexico win the Under-17 World Cup in 2005. Now on Arsenal's books but on loan at Osasuna in Spain.

THEO WALCOTT
16.03.89
ARSENAL; ENGLAND

Failed to get on the pitch at last year's World Cup but surely his day at the highest level will come soon – he has too much pace and skill for it not to. ●

Levelling up...Walcott

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ITALY

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1	George FORSYTH (Per)	20.06.82
18	Andrea IVAN	09.01.73
DEFENDERS		
3	Manuel BELLERI	29.08.77
6	Gianpaolo BELLINI	27.03.80
27	Daniele CAPELLI	20.06.86
80	Morris CARROZZIERI	16.11.80
5	Thomas MANFREDINI	27.05.80
26	Maximiliano PELLEGRINO	26.01.80
16	Claudio RIVALTA	30.06.78
2	Leonardo TALAMONTI (Arg)	11.12.81
MIDFIELDERS		
8	Antonino BERNARDINI	21.06.74
4	COSTINHA (Por)	01.12.74
15	Diego DE ASCENTIS	31.07.76
72	Cristiano DONI	01.04.73
79	Adriano FERREIRA PINTO (Bra)	10.12.79
17	Tiberio GUARENTE	01.11.85
22	Simone PADOIN	18.03.84
21	Fernando TISSONE (Arg)	24.07.86
FORWARDS		
7	Marino DEFENDI	19.08.85
33	Sergio FLOCCARI	12.11.81
10	Simone INZAGHI	05.04.76
23	Antonio LANGELLA	30.03.77
11	Zlatan MUSLIMOVIC (Bos)	06.03.81
9	Riccardo ZAMPAGNA	15.11.74
COACH		
Gigi DEL NERI		23.08.50

CAGLIARI

GOALKEEPERS		
16	Marco FORTIN	08.07.74
12	Jan KOPRIVEC (Sln)	15.07.88
1	Vincenzo MARRUOCCO	26.03.79
DEFENDERS		
31	Alessandro AGOSTINI	04.04.79
20	Paolo BIANCO	20.08.77
22	Joe BIZERA (Uru)	17.05.80
21	Michele CANINI	05.06.85
3	Cristiano DEL GROSSO	24.03.83
29	Michele FERRI	28.05.81
27	Giacomo GARAU	27.02.88
6	Diego LOPEZ (Uru)	22.08.74
28	Daniele MAGLIOCCHETTI	11.05.86
14	Francesco PISANO	29.04.86
MIDFIELDERS		
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4	Alessandro BUDEL	25.02.81
5	Daniele CONTI	09.01.79
7	Antonino D'AGOSTINO	08.10.78
23	Michele FINI	14.06.74
10	Pasquale FOGGIA	03.06.83
26	Marco MANCOSU	22.08.88
2	Davide MARCHINI	23.02.81
18	Andrea PAROLA	22.04.79
24	Rijat SHALA (Swi)	26.09.83
FORWARDS		
9	Robert ACQUAFRESCA	11.09.87
19	Joaquin LARRIVEY (Arg)	20.08.84
32	Alessandro MATRI	19.08.84
COACH		
Marco GIAMPAOLO		02.08.67

CATANIA

GOALKEEPERS		
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28	Raffaele IOIME	27.10.87
16	Ciro POLITO	12.04.79
DEFENDERS		
29	Gianluca FALSINI	02.10.75
5	Mauro MINELLI	02.04.81
32	Riccardo NARDINI	27.06.83
3	Rocco SABATO	19.04.82
2	Gennaro SARDO	08.05.79
21	Cristian SILVESTRI	21.01.75
4	Andrea SOTTIL	04.01.74
6	Lorenzo STOVINI	24.11.76
23	Christian TERLIZZI	22.11.79
7	Juan VARGAS (Per)	05.10.83
MIDFIELDERS		
17	David BAIOCCO	08.05.75
27	Marco BIAGIANTI	14.04.84
9	Giuseppe COLUCCI	24.08.80
8	Mark EDUSEI (Gha)	02.09.80
20	Marcello GAZZOLA	03.04.85
13	Mariano IZCO (Arg)	13.03.83
22	Ezequiel Cristian LLAMA (Arg)	26.06.86
25	Jorge Andres MARTINEZ (Uru)	05.04.83
30	Francesco MILLESI	24.07.80
19	Giacomo TEDESCO	02.02.76
FORWARDS		
14	BABU (Bra)	23.12.80
10	Giuseppe MASCARA	22.08.79
15	Takayuki MORIMOTO (Jap)	07.05.88
24	Gionatha SPINESI	09.03.78
COACH		
Silvio BALDINI		11.09.58

EMPOLI

GOALKEEPERS		
23	Daniele BALLI	16.09.67
1	Davide BASSI	12.04.85
12	Alberto PELAGOTTI	09.03.89
DEFENDERS		
14	Daniele ADANI	10.07.74
3	Nicola ASCOLI	11.09.79
20	Simone IACOPINI	30.04.87
16	Lino MARZORATTI	12.10.86
2	Felice PICCOLO	27.08.83
50	Francesco PRATALI	17.01.79
46	Andrea RAGGI	24.06.84
4	RINCON (Bra)	31.05.87
7	Vittorio TOSTO	14.06.74
15	Richard VANIGLI	01.01.71
MIDFIELDERS		
6	Ignazio ABATE	12.11.86
77	Luca ANTONINI	04.08.82
24	Antonio BUSCE	12.12.75
18	Guillermo GIACOMAZZI (Uru)	21.11.77
21	Sebastian GIOVINCO	26.01.87
19	Claudio MARCHISIO	19.01.86
8	Francesco MARIANINI	06.05.79
5	Davide MORO	02.01.82
87	Felice PREVETE	31.03.87
10	Ighli VANNUCCHI	05.08.77
FORWARDS		
17	EDER (Bra)	15.11.86
9	Nicola POZZI	30.06.86
11	Luca SAUDATI	18.01.78
27	Rey VOLPATO	27.08.86
COACH		
Luigi CAGNI		14.06.50

FIORENTINA

GOALKEEPERS		
25	Vlada AVRAMOV (Ser)	05.04.79
1	Sebastien FREY (Fra)	18.03.80
12	Cristiano LUPATELLI	21.06.78
DEFENDERS		
17	Federico BALZARETTI	06.12.81
3	Dario DAINELLI	09.06.79
5	Alessandro GAMBERINI	27.08.81
2	Per KROLDRUP (Den)	31.07.79
15	Ondrej MAZUCH (Cze)	15.03.89
23	Manuel PASQUAL	13.03.82
6	Alessandro POTENZA	08.03.84
33	Massimiliano TAGLIANI	04.04.89
21	Tomas UJFALUSI (Cze)	24.03.78
13	Anthony VANDEN BORRE (Blg)	24.10.87
MIDFIELDERS		
4	Marco DONADEL	21.04.83
19	Massimo GOBBI	31.01.80
16	Jan HABLE (Cze)	04.01.89
20	Martin JORGENSEN (Den)	06.10.75
22	Zdravko KUZMANOVIC (Swi)	22.09.87
11	Fabio LIVERANI	29.04.76
18	Riccardo MONTOLIVO	18.01.85
8	Michele PAZIENZA	05.08.82
81	Mario SANTANA (Arg)	25.12.81
7	Franco SEMIOLI	20.06.80
FORWARDS		
27	Samuel DI CARMINE	20.09.88
34	Matthias LEPILLER (Fra)	12.06.88
14	Arturo LUPOLI	24.06.87
10	Adrian MUTU (Rom)	08.01.79
9	Pablo Daniel OSVALDO (Arg)	12.01.86
29	Giampaolo PAZZINI	02.08.84
32	Christian VIERI	12.07.73
COACH		
Cesare PRANDELLI		19.08.57

GENOA

GOALKEEPERS		
83	RUBINHO (Bra)	04.08.83
73	Alessio SCARPI	19.04.73
DEFENDERS		
4	Francesco BEGA	26.10.74
3	Cesare BOVO	14.01.83
25	Gaetano DE ROSA	10.05.73
29	FABIANO (Bra)	27.06.79
23	Tommaso GHINASSI	05.06.87
16	Alessandro LUCARELLI	22.07.77
34	Andrea MASIELLO	05.02.86
33	Gleison Pinto SANTOS (Bra)	18.08.81
13	Andrea SIGNORINI	31.01.90
MIDFIELDERS		
5	Manuel COPPOLA	11.05.82
8	Sacramento Valerio DANILO (Bra)	03.11.82
28	Ivan JURIC (Cro)	25.08.75
24	Abdoulay KONKO (Fra)	09.03.84
77	Omar MILANETTO	30.11.75
19	Matteo PARO	17.03.83
15	Silvano RAGGIO GARIBALDI	27.03.89
18	Lucas Roberto RIMOLDI (Arg)	07.08.80
7	Marco ROSSI	01.04.78
FORWARDS		
22	Marco BORRIELLO	18.06.82
21	Marco DI VAIO	15.07.76
9	Luciano FIGUEROA (Arg)	19.05.81
11	Julio Cesar LEON (Hnd)	13.09.79
20	Ndiaye PAPA WAIGO (Sen)	20.01.84
14	Giuseppe SCULLI	23.03.81
COACH		
Gian Piero GASPERINI		26.01.58

INTERNAZIONALE

GOALKEEPERS		
71	Enrico ALFONSO (Por)	04.05.88
12	JULIO CESAR (Bra)	03.09.79
22	Paolo ORLANDONI	12.08.72
1	Francesco TOLDO	02.12.71
DEFENDERS		
16	Nicolas BURDISSO (Arg)	12.04.81
26	Cristian CHIVU (Rom)	26.10.80
17	Francesco COCO	08.01.77
2	Ivan CORDOBA (Col)	11.08.76
13	MAICON (Bra)	26.07.81
23	Marco MATERAZZI	19.08.73
6	MAXWELL (Bra)	27.08.81
24	Nelson RIVAS (Col)	25.03.83
25	Walter SAMUEL (Arg)	23.03.78
4	Javier ZANETTI (Arg)	10.08.73
MIDFIELDERS		
19	Esteban CAMBIASSO (Arg)	18.08.80
31	CESAR (Bra)	24.10.74
15	Olivier DACOURT (Fra)	25.09.74
7	Luis FIGO (Por)	04.11.72
11	Luis JIMENEZ (Chl)	17.06.84
30	PELE (Por)	14.09.87
21	Santiago SOLARI (Arg)	07.10.76
5	Dejan STANKOVIC (Ser)	11.09.78
14	Patrick VIEIRA (Fra)	23.06.76
FORWARDS		
10	ADRIANO (Bra)	17.02.82
18	Hernan CRESPO (Arg)	05.07.75
9	Julio CRUZ (Arg)	10.10.74
8	Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC (Swe)	03.10.81
29	David SUAZO (Hnd)	05.11.79
COACH		
Roberto MANCINI		27.11.64

JUVENTUS

GOALKEEPERS		
12	Emanuele BELARDI	09.10.77
1	Gianluigi BUFFON	28.01.78
31	Cristiano NOVEMBRE	15.06.87
22	Jess VANSTRATTAN (Aus)	19.07.82
DEFENDERS		
2	Alessandro BIRINDELLI	12.11.74
18	Jean-Alain BOUMSONG (Fra)	14.12.79
3	Giorgio CHIELLINI	14.08.84
19	Domenico CRISCITO	30.12.86
21	Zdenek GRYGERA (Cze)	14.05.80
14	JORGE ANDRADE (Por)	09.04.78
33	Nicola LEGROTTAGLIE	20.10.76
28	Cristian MOLINARO	30.07.83
5	Jonathan ZEBINA (Fra)	19.07.78
MIDFIELDERS		
4	Sergio ALMIRON (Arg)	07.11.80
8	Mauro CAMORANESI	04.10.76
29	Marco MARCHIONNI	22.07.80
11	Pavel NEDVED (Cze)	30.08.72
23	Antonio NOCERINO	09.04.85
24	Ruben OLIVERA (Uru)	04.05.83
7	Hasan SALIHAMIDZIC (Bos)	01.01.77
30	TIAGO (Por)	02.05.81
6	Cristiano ZANETTI	10.04.77
FORWARDS		
10	Alessandro DEL PIERO	09.11.74
9	Vincenzo IAQUINTA	21.11.79
20	Raffaele PALLADINO	17.04.84
17	David TREZEGUET (Fra)	15.10.77
COACH		
Claudio RANIERI		20.10.51

LAZIO

GOALKEEPERS		
32	Marco BALLOTTA	03.04.64
14	Tommaso BERNI	06.03.83
1	Fernando MUSLERA (Uru)	16.06.86
DEFENDERS		
22	Ivan ARTIPOLI	24.03.86
25	Sanchez CRIBARI (Bra)	06.03.80
29	Lorenzo DE SILVESTRI	23.05.88
15	Modibo DIAKITE (Fra)	02.03.87
3	Aleksandar KOLAROV (Ser)	10.11.85
86	Simone SANNIBALE	10.03.86
6	Lionel SCALONI (Arg)	16.05.78
13	Sebastiano SIVIGLIA	29.03.73
2	Guglielmo STENDARDO	06.05.81
8	Luciano ZAURI	20.01.78
MIDFIELDERS		
10	Roberto BARONIO	11.12.77
85	Valon BEHRAMI (Swi)	19.04.85
4	Fabio FIRMANI	26.05.78
23	Daniele GRECO	27.04.88
24	Cristian LEDESMA (Arg)	24.09.82
68	Christian MANFREDINI	01.05.75
11	Stefano MAURI	08.01.80
23	Mourad MEGHNI (Fra)	16.04.84
26	Gaby MUDINGAYI (Blg)	01.10.81
5	Massimo MUTARELLI	13.01.78
FORWARDS		
81	Simone DEL NERO	04.08.81
20	Stephen MAKINWA (Nig)	26.07.83
19	Goran PANDEV (Mac)	27.07.83
18	Tommaso ROCCHI	19.09.77
17	Igli TARE (Alb)	25.07.73
21	Fabio VIGAROLI	07.06.76
COACH		
Delio ROSSI		26.11.76

LIVORNO

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Marco AMELIA	02.04.82
14	Alfonso DE LUCIA	12.11.83
82	Antonio DI MATTEO	09.06.89
DEFENDERS		
69	David BALLERI	28.03.69
88	Christian CACCIO	16.02.89
6	Fabio GALANTE	20.11.73
77	Alessandro GRANDONI	22.07.77
15	Dario KNEZEVIC (Cro)	20.04.82
26	Giovanni PASQUALE	05.01.82
32	Simone PAVAN	29.04.74
18	Rahman REZAEI (Irn)	20.02.75
MIDFIELDERS		
17	Edgar ALVAREZ (Hnd)	18.01.80
9	Martin BERGVOLD (Den)	20.02.84
11	Daniele DE VEZZE	09.01.80
24	Vikash DHORASOO (Fra)	10.10.73
4	Antonio FILIPPINI	03.07.73
3	Emanuele FILIPPINI	03.07.73
16	Giuliano GIANNICHEDDA	21.09.74
21	Massimo LOVISO	09.04.84
7	Nico PULZETTI	13.02.84
8	Jose VIDIGAL (Por)	15.03.73
FORWARDS		
81	Erjon BOGDANI (Alb)	14.04.77
23	Alessandro DIAMANTI	02.05.83
22	DIEGO TRISTAN (Spa)	05.01.76
89	Elia PELLEGRINI	25.07.89
20	Fausto ROSSINI	02.03.78
10	Francesco TAVANO	02.03.79
78	Francesco Massimiliano VOLPE	03.03.86
COACH		
Giancarlo CAMOLESE		25.02.61

EURO SQUADS 2007-08

MILAN

GOALKEEPERS		
1	DIDA (Bra)	07.10.73
29	Valerio FIORI	27.04.69
16	Zeljko KALAC (Aus)	16.12.72
DEFENDERS		
25	Daniele BONERA	31.05.81
2	CAFU (Bra)	07.06.70
36	Matteo DARMIAN	02.12.89
31	DIGAO (Bra)	14.08.85
19	Giuseppe FAVALLI	08.01.72
18	Marek JANKULOVSKI (Cze)	09.05.77
4	Kakha KALADZE (Geo)	27.02.78
3	Paolo MALDINI	26.06.68
13	Alessandro NESTA	19.03.76
44	Massimo ODDO	14.06.76
17	Dario SIMIC (Cro)	12.11.75
MIDFIELDERS		
23	Massimo AMBROSINI	29.05.77
34	Ibrahim BA (Fra)	12.01.73
32	Cristian BROCCHI	30.01.76
5	EMERSON Ferreira (Bra)	04.04.76
8	Gennaro GATTUSO	09.01.78
20	Yoann GOURCUFF (Fra)	11.07.86
22	KAKA (Bra)	22.04.82
21	Andrea PIRLO	19.05.79
10	Clarence SEEDORF (Hol)	01.04.76
27	SERGINHO (Bra)	07.06.71
FORWARDS		
94	Willy AUBAMEYANG (Fra)	16.02.87
11	Alberto GILARDINO	05.07.82
9	Filippo INZAGHI	09.08.73
99	RONALDO (Bra)	22.09.76
COACH		
Carlo ANCELOTTI		10.06.59

NAPOLI

GOALKEEPERS		
12	Bigio DEL GIUDICE	10.07.88
22	Matteo GIANELLO	07.05.76
1	Gennaro IEZZO	08.06.73
DEFENDERS		
28	Paolo CANNAVARO	26.06.81
96	Matteo CONTINI	16.04.80
16	Andrea CUPI	27.01.76
21	Maurizio DOMIZZI	28.06.80
14	Gyorgy GARICS (Hun)	08.03.84
2	Gianluca GRAVA	07.03.77
6	Ruben MALDONADO (Par)	25.04.79
3	Erminio RULLO	19.02.84
19	Mirko SAVINI	11.03.79
MIDFIELDERS		
8	Manuele BLASI	17.08.80
18	Mariano BOGLIACINO (Uru)	02.06.80
27	Marco CAPPARELLA	28.03.75
24	Samuele DALLA BONA	06.02.81
20	Roberto DE ZERBI	06.06.79
23	Walter GARGANO (Uru)	27.07.84
5	Fabio GATTI	04.01.82
17	Marek HAMSIK (Slk)	22.07.87
4	Francesco MONTERVINO	07.05.78
FORWARDS		
11	Emanuele CALAIO	08.01.82
7	Ezequiel LAVEZZI (Arg)	03.05.85
9	Roberto SOSA (Arg)	24.01.75
25	Marcelo ZALAYETA (Uru)	05.12.78
COACH		
Edi REJA		10.10.45

PALERMO

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Federico AGLIARDI	11.02.83
12	Alberto FONTANA	23.01.67
88	Samir UJKANI (Alb)	05.07.88
DEFENDERS		
43	Andrea BARZAGLI	08.05.81
21	Giuseppe BIAVA	08.05.77
3	Ciro CAPUANO	10.07.81
16	Mattia CASSANI	26.08.83
53	Alberto COSSENTINO	10.09.88
26	Marco PISANO	13.08.81
77	Leandro RINAUDO	09.05.83
2	Cristian ZACCARDO	21.12.81
MIDFIELDERS		
23	Mark BRESCIANO (Aus)	11.02.80
20	Fabio CASERTA	24.09.78
32	Aimo DIANA	02.01.78
14	Roberto GUANA	21.01.81
17	Bosko JANKOVIC (Ser)	01.03.84
25	Giulio MIGLIACCIO	23.06.81
30	Fabio SIMPLICIO (Bra)	23.09.79
4	Giovanni TEDESCO	13.05.72
67	Francesco VELARDI	28.01.88
FORWARDS		
11	AMAURI (Bra)	03.06.80
19	Franco BRIENZA	19.03.79
18	Paolo CARBONARO	16.02.89
7	Edison CAVANI (Uru)	14.02.87
10	Fabrizio MICCOLI	27.06.79
COACH		
Stefano COLANTUONO		23.10.62

PARMA

GOALKEEPERS		
5	Luca BUCCI	13.03.69
89	Eros CORRADINI	17.02.89
99	Nicola PAVARINI	02.02.74
1	Radek PETR (Cze)	24.02.87
69	Fabio VIRGILI	26.04.86
DEFENDERS		
3	Giuseppe CARDONE	03.03.74
7	Paolo CASTELLINI	25.03.79
33	Ferdinand COLY (Sen)	09.10.73
19	Giulio FALCONE	31.05.74
24	FERNANDO COUTO (Por)	02.08.69
28	Massimo PACI	09.05.78
13	Marco ROSSI	30.09.87
16	Alessio TOMBESI	25.04.82
MIDFIELDERS		
21	Luca CIGARINI	20.06.86
4	Daniele DESSENA	10.05.87
18	Andrea GASBARRONI	06.08.81
17	McDonald MARIGA (SAf)	04.04.87
22	Federico MORETTI	28.10.88
10	Domenico MORFEO	16.01.76
4	Stefano MORRONE	26.10.78
55	Francesco PARRAVICINI	31.01.82
11	Andrea PISANU	07.01.82
2	Damiano ZENONI	23.04.77
FORWARDS		
20	Igor BUDAN (Cro)	22.04.80
32	Bernardo CORRADI	30.03.76
31	Stefano CRISCI	18.08.89
15	Leandro MARTINEZ (Arg)	15.10.89
8	Davide MATTEINI	11.05.82
9	Daniele PAPONI	16.04.88
83	REGINALDO (Bra)	31.07.83
COACH		
Domenico DI CARLO		23.03.64

REGGINA

GOALKEEPERS		
12	Andrea CAMPAGNOLO	17.06.78
22	Nenad NOVAKOVIC (Ser)	14.07.82
DEFENDERS		
6	Salvatore ARONICA	20.01.78
3	Nicolo CHERUBIN	02.12.86
55	Maurizio LANZARO	14.03.82
15	Angelo Moita MIGUEL GARCIA (Por)	04.02.83
23	Francesco MODESTO	16.02.82
13	Kris STADSGAARD (Den)	01.08.85
16	Carlos Adrian VALDEZ (Uru)	02.05.83
MIDFIELDERS		
20	Pablo ALVAREZ (Uru)	07.02.85
8	Edgar BARRETO (Par)	15.07.84
4	Emmanuel CASCIONE	22.09.83
10	Francesco COZZA	19.01.74
18	Emil HALLFREDSSON (Ice)	29.06.84
34	Simone MISSIROLI	23.05.86
25	Jose MONTIEL (Par)	19.03.88
32	Leonardo PETTINARI	23.07.86
14	Luca TOGNOZZI	03.10.77
7	Luca VIGIANI	25.08.76
FORWARDS		
17	Nicola AMORUSO	29.08.74
21	Fabio CERAVOLO	05.03.87
11	JOELSON (Bra)	10.07.83
24	Mike TULLBERG (Den)	22.12.85
COACH		
Massimo FICCADENTI		06.11.67

ROMA

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Gianluca CURCI	12.07.85
32	DONI (Bra)	22.10.79
27	JULIO SERGIO (Bra)	02.11.78
24	Carlo ZOTTI	03.09.82
DEFENDERS		
13	Marco ANDREOLLI	10.06.86
15	ANTUNES (Por)	01.04.87
77	Marco CASSETTI	29.05.77
3	CICINHO (Bra)	24.06.80
21	Matteo FERRARI	05.12.79
4	JUAN (Bra)	01.02.79
5	Philippe MEXES (Fra)	30.03.82
2	Christian PANUCCI	12.04.73
22	Max TONETTO	18.11.74
MIDFIELDERS		
8	Alberto AQUILANI	07.07.84
29	Ahmed BARUSSO (Gha)	26.12.84
33	Matteo BRIGHI	14.02.81
16	Daniele DE ROSSI	24.07.83
30	MANCINI (Bra)	01.08.80
20	Simone PERROTTA	17.09.77
26	Adrian PIT (Rom)	16.07.83
7	David PIZARRO (Chl)	10.09.79
11	Rodrigo TADDEI (Bra)	06.03.80
FORWARDS		
36	Claudio DELLA PENNA	12.05.89
18	Mauro ESPOSITO	13.06.79
14	Ludovic GIULY (Fra)	10.07.76
10	Francesco TOTTI	27.09.76
9	Mirko VUCINIC (Mne)	01.10.83
COACH		
Luciano SPALLETTI		07.03.59

SAMPDORIA

GOALKEEPERS		
1	Luca CASTELLAZZI	19.07.75
83	Antonio MIRANTE	08.07.83
DEFENDERS		
5	Pietro ACCARDI	12.09.82
33	Alessandro BASTRINI	03.04.87
16	Hugo CAMPAGNARO (Arg)	27.06.80
28	Daniele GASTALDELLO	25.06.83
6	Stefano LUCCHINI	02.10.80
7	Christian MAGGIO	11.02.82
46	Mirko PIERI	24.07.78
14	Luigi SALA	21.02.74
77	Cristian ZENONI	23.04.77
MIDFIELDERS		
27	Carmine CUCCINIELLO	27.12.88
40	Gennaro DELVECCHIO	25.03.78
21	Daniele FRANCESCHINI	13.01.76
18	Vladimir KOMAN (Ukr)	16.03.89
17	Angelo PALOMBO	25.09.81
8	Andrea POLI	29.09.89
23	Jonathan ROSSINI (Swi)	05.04.89
21	Paolo SAMMARCO	17.03.83
4	Sergio VOLPI	02.02.74
3	Reto ZIEGLER (Swi)	16.01.86
FORWARDS		
50	Pietro ARNULFO	13.09.88
11	Claudio BELLUCCI	31.05.75
13	Emiliano BONAZZOLI	20.01.79
29	Andrea CARACCIOLO	18.09.81
99	Antonio CASSANO	12.07.82
25	Gabriel Enzo FERRARI (USA)	01.09.88
88	Salvatore FOTI	08.08.88
22	Ikechukwu KALU (Nig)	18.04.84
9	Vincenzo MONTELLA	18.06.74
COACH		
Walter MAZZARRI		01.10.61

SIENA

GOALKEEPERS		
31	Dimitrios ELEFTHEROPOULOS (Gre)	07.08.76
50	Anssi JAAKKOLA (Fin)	13.03.87
1	Alex MANNINGER (Aut)	04.06.77
DEFENDERS		
73	Valerio BERTOTTO	15.01.73
3	Rodrigo DE LAZZARI (Bra)	10.12.80
33	Daniele FICAGNA	23.02.81
18	Leandro GRIMI (Arg)	09.02.85
15	Simone LORIA	28.10.76
90	Daniele PORTANOVA	17.12.78
13	Luca ROSSETTINI	09.05.85
21	Andrea ROSSI	07.11.86
6	Wanderson SCARDOVELLI (Bra)	27.09.84
MIDFIELDERS		
22	ALBERTO (Bra)	22.03.75
5	Paul CODREA (Rom)	04.04.81
11	Paolo DE CEGLIE	17.09.86
19	Gennaro ESPOSITO	18.03.85
14	Daniele GALLOPPA	15.05.85
23	Lukas JAROLIM (Cze)	29.07.76
8	Simone VERGASSOLA	24.01.76
2	Ricardo Matias VERON (Arg)	22.01.81
FORWARDS		
29	Cristian BUCCHI	13.02.77
70	CAETANO (Bra)	20.05.84
10	Enrico CHIESA	29.12.70
9	Daniele CORVIA	22.11.84
30	Fernando FORESTIERI (Arg)	16.01.90
7	Mario FRICK (Lie)	07.09.74
20	Tomas LOCATELLI	09.06.76
32	Massimo MACCARONE	06.09.79
COACH		
Andrea MANDORLINI		17.07.60

TORINO

GOALKEEPERS		
31	Alberto Maria FONTANA	02.12.74
89	Lys GOMIS (Sen)	06.10.89
1	Matteo SERENI	11.02.75
DEFENDERS		
2	Gianluca COMOTTO	16.10.78
15	Paolo Hernan DELLAFIORE	02.02.85
22	Marco DI LORETO	28.09.74
21	Ivan FRANCESCHINI	07.12.76
23	Salvatore LANNA	31.07.76
7	Marco MOTTA	14.05.86
14	Cesare NATALI	05.04.79
33	Matteo RUBIN	09.07.87
MIDFIELDERS		
8	Simone BARONE	30.04.78
29	Davide BOTTONE	11.04.86
5	Eugenio CORINI	30.07.70
13	Vince GRELLA (Aus)	05.10.79
11	Nikola LAZETIC (Ser)	09.02.78
10	Alessandro ROSINA	31.01.84
28	Tommaso VAILATTI	02.01.86
27	Paolo ZANETTI	16.12.82
FORWARDS		
20	Sasa BJELANOVIC (Cro)	11.06.79
17	David DI MICHELE	06.01.76
92	Dominique MALONGA (Fra)	08.01.89
16	Masashi OGURO (Jap)	04.05.80
4	Alvaro RECOBA (Uru)	17.03.76
30	Roberto STELLONE	22.07.77
9	Nicola VENTOLA	24.05.78
COACH		
Walter NOVELLINO		06.06.53

UDINESE

GOALKEEPERS		
25	Antonio CHIMENTI	30.06.70
22	Samir HANDANOVIC (Sln)	14.07.84
1	SAULO (Bra)	10.08.85
DEFENDERS		
6	Andrea CODA	25.04.85
8	Andrea DOSSENA	11.09.81
19	FELIPE (Bra)	31.07.84
32	Damiano FERRONETTI	01.11.84
24	Aleksandar LUKOVIC (Ser)	23.10.82
20	Giandomenico MESTO	25.05.82
78	Mahamadou SISSOKO (Fra)	08.08.88
2	Cristian ZAPATA (Col)	30.09.86
21	Tomas ZAPOTOCNY (Cze)	13.09.80
MIDFIELDERS		
28	Viktor BOUDIANSKI (Rus)	12.01.84
14	Antonio CANDREVA	28.02.87
4	Gaetano D'AGOSTINO	03.06.82
29	Raffaele DE MARTINO (Ita)	04.08.86
23	Roman EREMENKO (Fin)	19.03.87
88	Gokhan INLER (Aut)	27.06.84
5	Christian OBODO (Nig)	11.05.84
11	Giampiero PINZI	11.03.81
66	Tomas SIVOK (Cze)	15.09.83
FORWARDS		
10	Antonio DI NATALE	13.10.77
83	Antonio FLORO FLORES	18.06.83
3	Asamoah GYAN (Gha)	22.11.85
9	Michele PAOLUCCI	06.02.86
7	Simone PEPE	30.08.83
27	Fabio QUAGLIARELLA	31.10.83
COACH		
Pasquale MARINO		13.07.62

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CZECH REPUBLIC

Uphill struggle

Karel Bruckner's side are unlikely to emulate their performance of four years ago. Nick Bidwell reports

THE CZECH REPUBLIC are most unlikely to be burdened by high expectations when they travel to Austria and Switzerland next summer, despite the presence in their ranks of players of the calibre of keeper Petr Cech and attacking midfielder Tomas Rosicky, and their fine European Championship pedigree (winners in 1976, runners-up in 1996 and semi-finalists in 1960, 1980 and 2004, the earlier successes as Czechoslovakia).

A calamitous first-round exit from World Cup 2006 was compelling evidence of a side in decline, and performances in Group D of the Euro 2008 qualifiers have for the most part been far from inspirational.

The Czechs were shoddy when winning 3-0 in San Marino and 1-0 at home to Cyprus, and fortunate to hold the Republic of Ireland to a 1-1 draw in Dublin. But it was the 2-1 loss to Germany in Prague that fully exposed their misguided belief that they held a place in the European elite. The defence rocked, especially on the left, visibly-frustrated striker Jan Koller looked way past his prime, and, most important of all, creativity was in very short supply.

Rosicky, the newly-appointed captain in successsion to Tomas Galasek, was honest enough to concede that Germany completely deserved the spoils. The Arsenal midfielder said: "They controlled possession far better than us. Germany have more experience."

In where it hurts...Jaroslav Plasil gives John O'Shea grief during the 1-0 win over the Republic of Ireland in Prague

> "The coach is having to face down critics who claim he is too tactically inflexible"

Simply journeymen

Midfield is the real source of the pain right now. Much of the unit's guile and thrust was lost when Pavel Nedved and Karel Poborsky retired from international football last year; hard as players such as Libor Sionko, Jaroslav Plasil and Jan Polak try, they are simply journeymen. For all his brilliance, Rosicky cannot carry them on his own.

The Czechs gained some revenge for the defeat by Germany by winning 3-0 in the return in Munich to book their place in the finals, though by then the Germans had already qualified and so perhaps had taken their foot off the gas. More important, is that the team realise they must try to play the way they did in their two most impressive qualifying performances before Munich, the 3-0 victory in Slovakia and the 1-0 win at home to the Republic of Ireland. In both, they played with aggression and at a high tempo, taking the initiative from the off.

Sexagenarian coach Karel Bruckner is having to face down a growing band of critics, who claim he is too tactically inflexible and too wedded to the old guard. There are more and more calls for some of the team that finished runners-up at this summer's Under-20 World Cup to be given their chance.

Detractors also point to the excesses that allegedly took place in the team's hotel after the defeat by Germany. Tabloids gleefully revealed several players had got drunk celebrating defender Tomas Ujfalusi's birthday, and that five of them – Rosicky, Ujfalusi, Polak, Martin Jiranek and Marek Cech – were visited by prostitutes in the wee small hours. The accused denied the women had come to their rooms, but accepted their behaviour had been inappropriate.

The federation fined the squad £25,000, a sum labelled derisory by many in the media, who also claimed the players were being economical with the truth.

Bruckner felt so let down by his players he contemplated resigning but received the federation's vote of confidence. Yet how valid was that amid reports ex-Germany captain and Hungary boss Lothar Matthaus had been approached to succeed Bruckner? Federation vice-president Vlastimil Kostal admitted a meeting took place but insisted it was purely exploratory and no job offer was formulated.

Even so, it is by no means an ideal set of circumstances for a coach with a major tournament on the horizon.

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My way...but the astute Bruckner is experiencing his share of brickbats

THE COACH

Karel Bruckner

The 67-year-old, craggy-featured chess lover cultivated his tactical acumen and preference for attacking play as boss of Sigma Olomouc, Brno, Zilina, Banik Ostrava and Drnovice. He began a second spell in charge of the Czech Under-21s in 1998 and, having led them to silver at the 2000 European Championship, was appointed senior team coach in December 2001 following Jozef Chovanec's dismissal. The erudite and articulate coach made the astute decision to build his side around his former Under-21 charges, with the team reaching the Euro 2004 semi-finals and qualifying for last year's World Cup.

Prolific...Baros

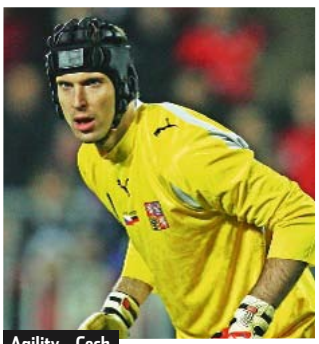
KEY PLAYERS

Milan Baros

Robust yet nimble front man who was top scorer at Euro 2004 with five goals and who will have to be similarly sharp if the Czechs are to go anywhere near their last-four placing in Portugal. Baros has a fine scoring record at international level – 31 in 59 games – but has not been nearly so prolific in a club career that has taken him to Liverpool, Aston Villa and now Lyon. Indeed, he is far from a regular starter at the French champions.

Petr Cech

One of the best keepers in the world. The Chelsea No 1 has it all: reflexes, giant build, feline agility, composure and never-failing levels of concentration. He is also brave and made a remarkably quick recovery after fracturing his skull last season. Cech's ability to save penalties could be vital at the finals.


Agility...Cech

Tomas Rosicky

The highly-gifted Arsenal playmaker gives the impression that a sudden gust of wind could topple him, but in reality he is very resilient and combative. Looked to be going through the motions in the latter part of a five-year spell at Borussia Dortmund, but has regained his appetite and form in spectacular fashion since joining Arsenal in summer 2006. ●

Combative...Rosicky

SQUAD

	CLUB	DOB	CAPS	GOALS
GOALKEEPERS				
Jaromir BLAZEK	Nurnberg (Ger)	29.12.72	12	0
Petr CECH	Chelsea (Eng)	20.05.82	56	0
Martin VANIAK	Slavia Prague	04.10.70	5	0
DEFENDERS				
Zdenek GRYGERA	Juventus (Ita)	14.05.80	51	1
Marek JANKULOVSKI	Milan (Ita)	09.05.77	62	10
Martin JIRANEK	Spartak Moscow (Rus)	25.05.79	24	0
Radoslav KOVAC	Spartak Moscow (Rus)	27.11.79	19	1
Zdenek POSPECH	Sparta Prague	14.02.78	3	0
David ROZEHNAL	Newcastle (Eng)	05.07.80	39	0
Marek SUCHY	Slavia Prague	29.03.88	0	0
Tomas UJFALUSI	Fiorentina (Ita)	24.03.78	64	2
Tomas ZAPOTOCNY	Udinese (Ita)	13.09.80	4	0
MIDFIELDERS				
Tomas GALASEK	Nurnberg (Ger)	15.01.73	61	1
David JAROLIM	Hamburg (Ger)	17.05.79	13	1
Marek MATEJOVSKY	Mlada Boleslav	20.12.81	3	1
Karel PITAK	Salzburg (Aut)	28.01.80	3	0
Jaroslav PLASIL	Osasuna (Spa)	05.01.82	31	2
Jan POLAK	Anderlecht (Blg)	14.03.81	33	6
Daniel PUDIL	Slovan Liberec	27.09.85	2	0
Tomas ROSICKY	Arsenal (Eng)	04.10.80	67	18
Libor SIONKO	FC Copenhagen (Den)	01.02.77	27	4
Tomas SIVOK	Udinese (Ita)	15.09.83	5	0
Vladimir SMICER	Slavia Prague	25.05.73	81	27
FORWARDS				
Milan BAROS	Lyon (Fra)	28.10.81	59	31
Libor DOSEK	Sparta Prague	24.04.78	0	0
Martin FENIN	Teplice	16.04.87	3	0
Jan KOLLER	Monaco (Fra)	30.03.73	81	50
Marek KULIC	Sparta Prague	11.10.75	9	2
David LAFATA	Austria Wien (Aut)	18.09.81	4	2
Jiri STAJNER	Hannover (Ger)	27.05.76	27	3
Stanislav VLCEK	Slavia Prague	26.02.76	8	0

Caps and goals information as at 18.10.07

Stop-start...the Czech Republic have failed to find consistency

The country in depth – the state of the game, club-by-club guide, movers and shakers

March of the Elephants

The national team are on a high despite turmoil in their war-torn country

THE IRONY of the Ivory Coast's quick elevation into an African footballing superpower is that it has come at a time of turmoil in the once-prosperous country.

For decades, the former French colony was held up as a model post-independence state, albeit run with an iron fist by Paris' proxy, Felix Houphouet-Boigny.

But the death of the "Grand Old Man of Africa" more than a decade ago precipitated a crisis in leadership and eventually led to a civil war that, strangely, went hand in hand with a rise in the Ivorians' footballing fortunes.

It was only months before last year's World Cup, the west Africans' first, that a peace accord between northern rebels and the south-based government was signed.

The conflict centres around religious and ethnic issues and, ordinarily, should have a divisive influence on the make-up of the Ivorian national side. Simplistically put, the southern Christian majority do not want to cede control to a growing Muslim power base, who descend mostly from immigrants from neighbouring countries who came to work in the once-flourishing cocoa industry when the Ivory Coast was at the height of its economic strength.

The mix of the national team, the Elephants, is split along similar lines but players from across the divide such as southerner Didier Drogba and northerner Kolo Toure have gone out of their way to use football as a forum for reconciliation. One of Drogba's first actions in the days after he became the first Ivorian to win the African Footballer of the Year award was to take the trophy to both the state house in the main city, Abidjan, and to the rebel capital of Bouake. A recent African Nations Cup qualifier, against Madagascar, was also played at Bouake amid much political gesturing.

Conflict aside, the Ivorians are benefiting from a generation of considerable talent, many of whom germinated in the controversial Sol Beni academy run by former French international Jean-Marc Guillou.

> "Players from across the divide have used football as a forum for reconciliation"

He produced a bevy of stars but a fall-out with Roger Ouegnin, owner of top club side ASEC Abidjan, led to litigation at FIFA and a cacophony of recriminations.

More than 30 graduates of the academy joined clubs in Europe, including Aruna Dindane, Didier Zokora and Toure, who were all teenage prodigies in Africa's top club competitions before making the step across the Mediterranean. Ten graduates were all at Belgian side Beveren at the same time and formed a near all-African XI in the Belgian Cup Final in 2004.

Glimpses of the national team's potential were seen in the qualifiers for the 2004 Nations Cup, when they overran South Africa in their own backyard. But the Ivorians squandered a multitude of chances and lost the game to miss out on qualification for the finals. That led to a predictable reshuffle, including the appointment of veteran French coach Henri Michel to replace compatriot Robert Nouzaret.

The red-cheeked Michel, with his gruff voice and cigarette in hand, is well versed in the ways of African football and was quick to set about building on the potential his predecessor had helped uncover.

Michel took over at the start of 2004 and won seven of his first eight games, building his team around Drogba, Toure, Dindane, Zokora, Kanga Akale and diminutive flying full-back Arthur Boka. Michel received full backing from federation chief Jacques Anouma, a close confidant of the country's president, Laurent Gbagbo. Anouma's close proximity to power means few stones are left unturned for the welfare of the team.

Despite the new coach's early successes, the Elephants were not considered serious candidates for a berth at the 2006 World Cup since they had been drawn in the same

Through the roof...Didier Drogba accepts the acclaim at a parade at the Felix Houphouet-Boigny stadium in Abidjan after being named African Footballer of the Year

qualifying group as traditional big-hitters Egypt and Cameroon. A win away against the Egyptians put Michel's side firmly in the frame, but they appeared to have blown their chance when losing at home to Cameroon in the penultimate round. However, the Ivorians beat Sudan away in their last game, and Cameroon could only draw at home to Egypt, missing a late penalty, to allow the Ivorians entry to Germany through the back door.

Real contenders

The Elephants' surprise success seemed to give the side a bucketload of confidence and by the time of the Nations Cup finals in Egypt in early 2006 they had a look of real contenders about them. They proved as much by reaching the Final, against the hosts, and had Drogba been a little more accurate in his finishing might well have not had to go through the agony of penalties following a goalless draw. Drogba missed again during the shoot-out, as did fellow forward Bakary Kone, and Egypt won 4-2 to rack up a record fifth African title.

The Ivorians have won the Nations Cup only once, in 1992. They hosted the tournament in 1984 but, despite the presence of youthful Monaco sensation Yossouf Traore, crashed out at the group stage.

Then, when flying beneath the radar, they emerged as surprise and somewhat fortunate winners eight years later in nearby Senegal. The Ivorians beat neighbours Ghana 11-10 on penalties in the Final, also after a 0-0 draw. But Ghana captain Abedi Pele was suspended for the Final, while the Elephants scored only four goals in the entire tournament, although they did not concede a single goal.

The Ivorians are among the favourites for next year's Nations Cup and will be expected to be part of a much better showing by African countries in general when South Africa hosts the World Cup in 2010.

Michel departed after last year's World Cup, where the Ivorians were rated as one of the more entertaining teams even though they failed to make it through the group stage. Former Germany defender Uli Stielike took over last October, going undefeated in his first eight games without conceding a goal and winning the first six.

The coach can now call upon the services of Chelsea's Salomon Kalou, who had been hoping for a Dutch passport but in March decided he would finally throw his international lot in with the Elephants. That Kader Keita, who cost French champions Lyon £13million from Lille in the summer, cannot command a regular starting place in the Ivorian team attests to their strength.

Over the next two years, the Ivorians have to show whether they are just another African team bristling with potential but unable to deliver or, indeed, the real deal.

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Issia Wazi, Reveil Daloa, Stade Abidjan...a guide to the top-division teams

1 DENGUELE SPORTS
Team from Odienne, in the north of the country. The president is Abdoulaye Kone, a high-ranking government official in the province.

2 SABE SPORTS
The Bouna-based club have evolved into the most competitive of the provincial sides over the past two seasons but still await their first league title.

3 REVEIL DALOA
Have little to show for almost 50 years in the top echelons of Ivorian football. Their only trophy was the Cup in 1980, 20 years after their only previous appearance in the Final. Daloa, near the centre of the country, was the scene of some vicious fighting during the civil strife.

4 LAGOKE
The other Daloa-based club were doomed to relegation several weeks before the end of the season, having won promotion only last term.

5 SO ARMEE
The army club (full name Societe Omnisport de l'Armee) have state support, a contentious subject in football circles. They are based in the official capital of Yamoussoukro, in the centre of the country, and have won only one trophy – the Cup in 1996.

6 ISSIA WAZI
Won the Cup in 2006, their first trophy, and reached the Final again this year, losing to ASEC. Female president Ginette Ross is the subject of much media attention.

7 SC GAGNOA
One of just five clubs still in existence to have won the League, their only success coming in 1976. President Sylvestre Gnohite is brother of Gagnoa's mayor and has a colourful reputation.

8 SEWE SPORT
Ambitious team from the port town of San Pedro. President Eugene Diomande has already got through two coaches this season, recently appointing former international Didier Otokore to the hot seat. As cup winners in 2005 Sewe Sport have already had a taste of continental competition in the Confederation Cup, Africa's UEFA Cup equivalent.

9 ASEC ABIDJAN
The country's biggest club are eyeing an eighth successive league title and a 16th in 18 seasons, having already won the Cup this year. Also had continental success in 1998 in the African Champions Cup. Owner Roger Ouegnin has overseen a steady flow of talent, the players moving on to clubs in Europe as soon as they are polished products.

10 AFRICA SPORTS
Long-standing rivals of ASEC and also have won continental silverware – the African Cup-winners Cup in 1992 and 1999. Africa Sports are one of the country's oldest clubs and were a force before independence and in the years that followed, but they have lost considerable ground to ASEC over the past decade.

IVORY COAST

11 STADE ABIDJAN
Won the last of their five league titles in 1969, three years after becoming the first Ivorian side to win a continental trophy, the Champions Cup, when the tournament was still in its infancy. President Richmond Abi has ambitious plans to put the club back at the top.

12 STELLA CLUB
Stella were the last side apart from ASEC and Africa Sports to win the championship, in 1984. They also won the African Cup-winners Cup and the first CAF Cup, but the current team are a long way off such successes.

13 JC ABIDJAN
The country's oldest club, having been founded in 1932, and are based in the populous shanty town of Treichville on the fringes of Abidjan. The team finished third in the League two years ago, their best placing since returning to the top flight in 2000.

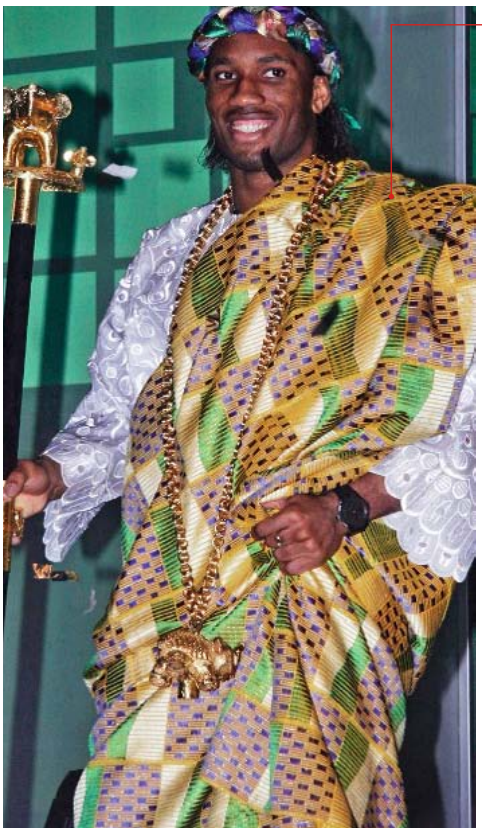
14 ES BINGERVILLE
Formed only in 1995 but wasted little time in climbing to the top flight and becoming a competitive team.

The movers and shakers in Ivorian football

● SIMPLICE ZINSOU
The son-in-law of former state president Felix Houphouet-Boigny won two continental titles during his time at the helm of Africa Sports, but has slipped quietly into the background since the death of his patron, precipitating a demise in the club's fortunes. Zinsou, who runs a shipping empire, is still a consultant to Confederation of African Football president Issa Hayatou.

● ROGER OUEGNIN
Ouegnin, a lawyer, became president of ASEC Abidjan in 1989, since when the club have become virtually perennial domestic champions and won the African Champions Cup in 1998. Ouegnin recently secured ties with Charlton Athletic, although what benefit this will bring is open to speculation.

● JACQUES ANOUMA
The federation president is also right-hand financial man of state president Laurent Gbagbo. Sepp Blatter showed his backing for Anouma as a candidate to challenge for leadership of the Confederation of African Football in the 2009 election by supporting him in his successful bid for a place on the FIFA executive committee. But it now seems the FIFA president has cooled towards the Ivorian chief.



● DIDIER DROGBA
The Chelsea striker is the only Ivorian to be crowned African Footballer of the Year and is a massive symbol for the war-torn country. His rapid elevation in the world footballing ranks has been matched by that of the national team. Drogba's iconic status for Ivory Coast exists despite him having spent his formative years in France.

● PATRICK LIEWIG
The passionate French coach has been at the helm of all-conquering ASEC for three seasons. The team's great success has brought pressure of its own – a section of the supporters call for Liewig's head whenever ASEC fail to win a game – but the coach seems to have the support of those who matter.

● LAURENT POKOU
Before Drogba he was the country's most famous footballer and still holds the record for goals scored in African Nations Cup finals – 14, in the 1968 and 1970 tournaments, including five in one match. After spending the majority of his career with ASEC, Pokou played in France, for Rennes and Nancy.

● ULI STIELIKE
The German coach had a hard act to follow when replacing Henri Michel as national team boss. Although the Frenchman was not personally popular, he was respected for taking the Elephants to unprecedented heights. But Stielike, whose French is perfect from his time in Switzerland, has certainly started well, going undefeated in his first eight games.

● KOLO TOURE
The passion of the Bouake-born defender is as important to the success of the national team as the goalscoring acumen of Drogba. The Arsenal centre-back was the best player for the Elephants when they finished runners-up at the last Nations Cup finals in Egypt.

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

Fall guys...champions ASEC take on Egypt's Al Ahly

● The league season runs from late January or early February until the autumn, with teams playing each other on a home-and-away basis.

● The champions qualify for the African Champions League, the runners-up enter the Confederation Cup, Africa's UEFA Cup equivalent.

● The Ivorian Cup is a straight knockout competition, with the top-flight clubs entering in the third round. Previously, just 16 teams competed – the top six at the halfway stage of the first division season and 10 teams from the lower divisions. The winners also enter the Confederation Cup.

● The Ivorian Super Cup, known as the Coupe Felix Houphouet-Boigny in honour of the late state president, is a four-team, pre-season tournament featuring the top three clubs in the previous season's league championship and the winners of the Cup.

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MILAN: LATE 80s/EARLY 90s

Keir Radnedge remembers how the media mogul rescued Milan and transformed the landscape of Italian football

The Berlusconi revolution

Kings of Europe...Berlusconi, surrounded by his delighted players, hoists the trophy after Milan's 1-0 win over Benfica in the 1990 European Cup Final in Vienna

ROMAN ABRAMOVICH has a long way to go before he can even come within a distance of the achievements and status of Silvio Berlusconi.

Milan's owner and president has been largely in command of European and Italian club football for well over two decades after building his initial millionaire's empire through a media conglomeration based on regional commercial television channels.

In 1986 Milan, the club he had always supported, were scandal-ridden and bankruptcy-bound. Berlusconi decided to step in. His father Luigi did not approve, warning: "The only return on your money will be the bad publicity that comes to every president of that club."

Berlusconi, however, was not so much on an ego trip as a commercial voyage, possessed of a vision that matched that of FIFA president Joao Havelange and Adidas heir Horst Dassler when they laid the television/sponsorship-driven foundation

"Berlusconi was not so much on an ego trip as a commercial voyage"

for the World Cup's enrichment in the mid-1970s.

He was the personification of the aggressive commercialism that swiftly revolutionised European club football and led directly to the creation of the Champions League as well as the G-14 group of elite clubs and UEFA's own club forum.

Berlusconi's TV empire took aggressive advantage of the Europe-wide broadcasting expansion powered by the development of cable and satellite technology and facilitated by a competitive liberalism imposed by European law.

His TV channels provided a light entertainment diet of game shows, pop music and football that shattered the grip of state broadcaster RAI. They also generated profits that propelled Berlusconi on into publishing, insurance and grocery chains.

Berlusconi went out to win friends through football. So successfully did his business expand – and his ego along with it – that he employed his corporate pre-eminence in Italy as a springboard into politics, becoming prime minister. With a chillingly effective populism he even named his political party Forza Italia, the traditional encouragement for the national team.

Milan were in a sorry state when Berlusconi swooped. The club, one of the European Cup's original giants, had been

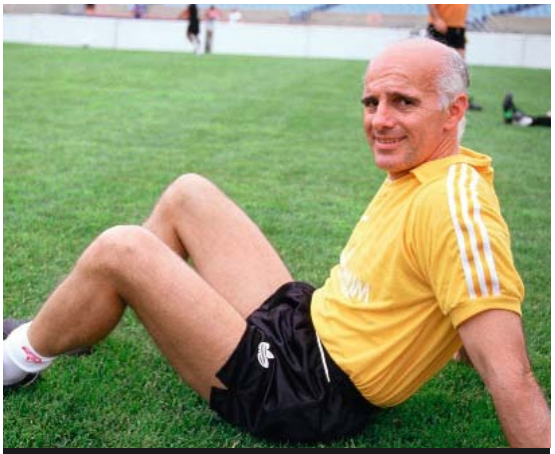
relegated twice in quick succession – once as punishment for a match-fixing scandal – and were £20million in debt.

Berlusconi, setting a pattern Abramovich would emulate at Chelsea, paid off the debts and provided the cash to buy Ajax's Marco Van Basten, the finest centre-forward of his era, plus Ruud Gullit from PSV Eindhoven for a then world record £6m.

After Milan duly carried off the Serie A championship for the first time in nine years, Berlusconi also financed the acquisition of a third key Dutchman, Frank Rijkaard.

Turning stars into winners takes a top-class coach. Berlusconi found him in Arrigo Sacchi. The shoe-maker from Fusignano had never played at professional level, but as he said: "You don't have to have been a horse to be a successful jockey."

Sacchi's horse sense produced a winning thoroughbred by mixing Dutch fluidity with Italian backbone, such players as stopper Alessandro Costacurta, playmaker Carlo Ancelotti (now Milan coach), sweeper and skipper Franco Baresi, and magnificent young left-back Paolo Maldini. Sacchi, Fabio Capello, Alberto Zaccheroni and Ancelotti have all enjoyed long tenures as coach. Here, perhaps, is a key factor in Berlusconi's success. First he appoints top-class coaches, then he leaves them alone to get on with the job, though, as he says: "It's only right and proper that the man who steers the ship should make his views known at the right time and place."


Winning mix...coach Sacchi blended Dutch fluidity with Italian backbone

Shouting his opinions

In fact, Berlusconi has displayed the most rabid fan's insistence on shouting his opinions from the San Siro rooftop. Each coach has needed the strength of personality and self-confidence to pick his own team and not the president's, while Berlusconi has been championing the causes, variously, of Argentinian striker Claudio Borghi, the Slav pairing of Dejan Savicevic and Zvonimir Boban, then the tactical value of two strikers rather than one so that "his" Andrii Shevchenko should always be a starter.

THE MILAN "FAMILY"

SILVIO BERLUSCONI has always insisted on maintaining a "family atmosphere" at Milan. The first-team squad back in 1986 when he took charge included Franco Baresi (later youth coach), Paolo Maldini (now club captain), Roberto Donadoni (now Italy coach) and Mauro Tassotti (part of the coaching team). They won the League in 1988 and thrashed Steaua Bucharest 4-0 to win the Champions Cup the following year. The 1989 Final line-up (main picture) was:

Maldini and Berlusconi

Top row, left to right

Paolo Maldini
Left-back, only 20 but already in his fourth season. Still at the club in a playing capacity.

Marco Van Basten
Supremely-gifted Dutch forward, signed from Ajax in 1987. Now national coach of Holland.

Ruud Gullit
Dutch forward who joined with Van Basten. Scored two goals in the Final. Now a media pundit.

Carlo Ancelotti
Italian international midfielder. Head coach of Milan since November 2001.

Frank Rijkaard
Dutch international midfielder who joined as Milan's third foreigner in 1988. Now head coach of Barcelona.

Giovanni Galli
Goalkeeper. Now works as a scout and media pundit.

Bottom row, left to right

Franco Baresi
Captain and central defender/libero. Spent his entire career at Milan, retiring in 1997 to work with the club's youth sides.

Roberto Donadoni
Left-sided Italian international midfielder. Spent 10 seasons with Milan. Now Italy's national coach.

Alessandro Costacurta
Central defender who retired last season after 22 years at Milan and has joined the club's coaching staff.

Angelo Colombo
Midfielder who was one of Arrigo Sacchi's first signings, from Udinese in 1987.

Mauro Tassotti
Right-back best remembered for his elbow attack on Spain's Luis Enrique at the 1994 World Cup. Now a member of Milan's backroom coaching staff.

Any coach could disagree but only as long as his results stood up. As Berlusconi – who openly admits he fancies his own potential as a football coach – has said: "Milan would always like to be the best, of course. But at the highest level winning or losing is often a matter of luck.

"What is important is that we are always among the main actors in this theatre. As long as we are always competing to win then we will win more often than not – and a winning coach gives me no excuse to replace him."

Access to Berlusconi has become more and more difficult; a few morsels of wisdom are tossed out to hungry journalists as Berlusconi is swept along by his aides, acolytes and bodyguards either side of the VIP suite at the Giuseppe Meazza.

But in the early years, when Berlusconi was still a businessman and had not yet transmogrified onwards and upwards into a political animal, he remained a fascinating individual study in power.

He would hold court at his villa at Arcore, outside Milan, talking and acting with an impatience that was as much physical as it was verbal. Berlusconi would talk in Italian and then switch into English to finish the sentence before the translator had got there; he would constantly jump out of his chair to pour some more water or adjust the window blinds or move a chair. He was a man on the move, and his club have imitated his personality.

In Berlusconi's 21 years in power Milan have won 24 trophies, including five Champions Cups. The personal cost is unknown but Berlusconi concedes the glory and the profile have come at a heavy financial price.

> **Milan must always be among the main actors in the theatre. As long as we compete to win we will win more often than not – and a winning coach gives me no excuse to replace him**

Berlusconi sets out his philosophy for the well-being of his beloved club

He said recently: "Milan is a passion I inherited from my father. It's been one of the greatest delights of my life. From the financial point of view, yes, of course it's cost me money. But you must always be prepared to make a sacrifice for something you love."

The first Champions Cup win, against Steaua Bucharest in Barcelona in 1989, demonstrated Berlusconi's drive not only to be successful but also to be seen to be successful.

On the eve of the Final, Spanish TV engineers went on strike. Berlusconi pulled strings. He commandeered an Italian military plane to fly his own technicians and extra cameras into Barcelona on the morning of the game. Thus 300 million viewers around the world saw Milan win the trophy for the third time by a walkover 4-0.

Forza Milan...Berlusconi hails the fans before a game at San Siro

FROM THE ARCHIVES

MAY 1992

"Pay-TV is the way forward"

SILVIO BERLUSCONI outlined his blueprint for the future of football in an interview with Keir Radnedge. The key to his vision was television. "Football is currently ignoring part of its support," he said. "First, there are the fans in the stadium; but that means only 50,000 or 60,000. Then there are the fans who watch bits and pieces on the state channels. But the third audience, which we are not reaching, is to be found on pay-TV. Through cable and satellite we must be able to reach the committed fan who wants to watch our games. "For example, in Lombardy [the region of which Milan is the capital] that could mean two or three million viewers. And we believe we are now the best-supported team in all of Italy. The latest figures tell us we have five million fans throughout the country. They cannot all get into the stadium. But they could watch us through pay-TV."

They also saw Berlusconi join his players and virtually take over the presentation ceremony.

He was, indeed, the new face of European football, in which the clubs are eroding the power of the national associations. In the early 1990s he forecast: "The concept of the national team will become less and less important. It is the clubs with which fans associate...I can even envisage that one day we will let in fans free to the stadium because we need the thousands to create the atmosphere that television transmits to the millions." ●

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A major inconvenience

Modern stadiums may pass FIFA's toilet test but they lack character

A CONFESSION: I never remember, in my younger days, deciding against going to a football match because the stadium toilets were a shambles. They probably weren't great, but you put up with them for a few minutes, then got back to concentrating on the game.

In that sense – in those far off, forever lost days – they were rather like coaches: you never really thought about them, they weren't a factor.

Boy, was I wrong, I now realise. I've since learned that terrible toilets nearly caused the entire football population to stop going to stadiums in the 1970s, and that coaches are really the most fascinating part of the sport.

I'm not at all certain about the coaches, but I've learned my lesson when it comes to toilets. Rather painfully, as it turned out. Earlier this year, I paid my first visit to the new Wembley (dare I say, it was over 60 years later than my first visit to the old Wembley?). Armed with a leaflet full of quite incredible figures, I arrived early at the stadium determined to investigate what seemed the most incredible figure of all: the new stadium contained 2,618 toilets (plus two dog-relieving stations).

I marched around the really quite boring stadium exterior until I saw a pair of doors – His and Hers toilets. A female lady person emerged from the Hers door. I marched up to the His and yanked on the shining handle. The door was locked solid, and the jolt threatened a shattered wrist or a fractured elbow or a dislocated shoulder, or all three.

I had to walk some 200 yards further round the stadium to find a His that was open. As to why the Hers was open and not the His, I have just found the answer in an elaborate FIFA publication on football stadiums, which has this to say under the category Sanitary Facilities: "The fact that women usually require more time in these facilities should be accounted for by providing additional fixtures."

The toilet factor still hangs heavy in the minds of FIFA, it seems. In his foreword to the book, Urs Linsi (remember him?) feels obliged to stress that fans must be able "to visit the toilet without an ordeal".

Surely the toilet problem is now solved, along with other long-standing problems such as sight lines and comfortable seats. There are now plenty of concession stands, too; they are what is called "accessible" – though the prices are not.

The modern stadium is, no question, a marvel. But like most high-tech triumphs, it is totally devoid of character and personality. Seen at its worst – empty – it is a featureless circular bowl or saucer, a hole in the air, with a green centre surrounded by receding banks of seats, which are usually coloured red, I find. Nothing that looks like design or architecture can even begin until you reach the back of those seats, because any sort of structure would get in the way of the sight lines.

Not to be churlish, Wembley is impressive as empty bowls go, not least because of its spanking newness. But you could be in the Emirates or Camp Nou (though I'll bet they don't measure up on the toilet front).

One thing about Wembley and the Emirates, though, that endears both to me is that they have been built in the wrong place. You just don't build new stadiums in the middle of residential areas where there's inadequate road access and no space for parking anyway, should you be stupid enough to bring your damn car with you.

The FIFA book is eminently sensible about that: "A stadium should be situated in a location which is sufficiently large to provide spacious and safe external public circulation..." and so on, ending with: "Large sites also increase the possibility of providing adequate on-site parking areas."

Parking disaster

Obviously, both Wembley and the Emirates are a disaster when it comes to parking. There isn't any worth talking about, certainly not as advocated by FIFA, whose book states: "For a stadium with a capacity of 60,000, parking places should be provided for 10,000 cars." So the 90,000-capacity Wembley needs parking spaces for 15,000 cars, and it has space for virtually none. A huge slice of income is being thrown away here. Heaven knows what these guys would charge to park your car – let's say it's £10, in which case Wembley is turning its back on £150,000 of easy revenue for each sold-out event.

Obviously, Wembley and the Emirates are huge mistakes, built – knowingly – in the wrong place. Both of those stadiums should be where modern stadiums belong, on the outskirts of London, just off the motorway, circular concrete colosseums set in the middle of concrete parks, acres and acres of concrete devoted to the automobile.

With that image, that cold impersonal structural image that makes perfect architectural, financial and commercial sense, both Wembley and the Emirates suddenly make sense. Suddenly they have loads of character and warmth, not because of what they are but because of where they are. They're where I want them to be, at the centre of a living community, in the middle of football history.

They're anachronisms, of course. Ultimately, we're probably all headed for the motorway and ample parking, but for the moment I'm all for the senseless inner city stadium with no parking. Inside, it's probably too spick and span for my tastes (what is this anyway, a sports venue or a hospital?), but it's only for an hour or two, then you're back in the real world, right there, a real world of little streets and houses and shops that has always known about football games and football crowds. That feels right, and I love it. ●

Illustration by Dave Semple

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Dida gets his dues

A new UEFA rule ensured the Brazilian was punished for his play-acting

UEFA WAS FOLLOWING the letter of a recently-introduced disciplinary regulation when banning Brazilian actor Dida for two Champions League matches after he had failed, so pathetically, his audition at Celtic Park.

Earlier this year the European body said it would now retrospectively punish instances of cheating that had been missed by match officials. The regulation recommends an automatic ban of two matches for players who act "with the obvious intent to cause any match official to make an incorrect decision". Obviously, that would include calling off a game for perceived crowd troubles, the apparent intent of the Milan keeper after he fell to the ground having been lightly slapped by a Celtic fan who had run on to the pitch when the Scottish champions had taken a 2-1 lead late on.

The first player to feel the chill new wind was Lithuania midfielder Saulius Mikoliunas, who was banned for two European Championship ties after television replays showed him diving to win a penalty during the 3-1 defeat by Scotland in September.

Loss of face...Dida sprawls on the turf but his antics fooled nobody

Sadly, Dida is not the first Brazilian player to indulge in amateur dramatics at high level. In 1990, with Napoli going head to head with Milan for the Serie A title, their Brazilian midfielder Alemao collapsed in a heap after being apparently struck by a 50 lire coin during a game at Atalanta. Play was held up for a couple of minutes while Alemao was treated by physio Salvatore Carmando and in due course was taken to hospital, where, according to Napoli president Corrado Ferlaino, "he was still so confused he did not recognise me".

The game was duly awarded to Napoli by the League's disciplinary commission, which effectively handed them the *scudetto*. Years later various witnesses, including several Napoli players, recalled that Alemao had wanted to get up and play on but was told by Carmando: "Stay down, stay down!"

Twelve years later, Rivaldo tried it on at an even higher level, the World Cup finals. Brazil were leading Turkey 2-1 in a group game in Ulsan, South Korea and had won a corner in the closing minutes. Midfielder Hakan Unsal kicked the ball at Rivaldo, who was waiting to take the kick, hitting him on the knees, but the Brazilian collapsed holding his face in apparent anguish. Korean referee Kim Young-joo booked Hakan, while Rivaldo was later fined £8,000 for unsporting behaviour.

Not that the Brazilians were worried. As Ronaldo said at their next press conference: "What Rivaldo did was clever. The World Cup is a war and fools do not win wars."

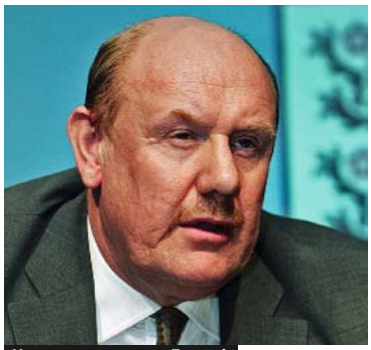
FA on right technological track

THE ENGLISH FA is still hoping the International Board will sanction a high-level experiment – in the Premier League or Football League – with goal-line technology.

Chief executive Brian Barwick insists he has been "banging down the doors" at FIFA with his support for a system that is being developed by the Hawk-Eye company – which pioneered the tennis version – and is on test at Reading's academy.

Barwick says: "We are market leaders in trying to do it, and now the Premier League is taking it on in terms of experimentation. I absolutely buy the fact that when the ball crosses the line...it's imperative that we know it, the referee knows it, and he's not the guy with a red face because everybody else at home knows it."

FIFA's concerns are that a proven technology is adopted at all and also whether technology infringes the universality of the game (in other words, that football remains the same at Premier League and pub team levels). The first issue appears more contentious than the second. After all, no one is saying the laws of the game would be affected. That, surely, is the key. So bring it on.



Keen to experiment...Barwick

Expanding horizon...George Weah was the first non-European winner of the *France Football* award in 1995

Awards jam in prospect as Ballon D'Or goes global

REST IN PEACE the European Footballer of the Year. He is no more. *France Football*, the magazine that created him in 1956, when Stanley Matthews was first winner, has decreed he no longer exists. *FF* used its 60th anniversary edition to announce that Europe is such a narrowing concept in these days of the global game that it makes no sense to restrict its annual poll and from this year the award will be open to any player in the world.

In truth, the magazine had undermined the European concept of the award, the *Ballon d'Or*, in the mid-1990s when it decided to open up eligibility to all players registered with European clubs. Up until then, it had been open only to players who qualified to play for European national teams.

The decision to widen the scope in the 1990s was made partly because of the fear that FIFA's world player of the year award was gaining a higher profile and more kudos. Also, since the winning player was always with a European club, it appeared that no damage could be caused by opening it up to non-Europeans.

Liberian George Weah duly won the first expanded European award in 1995, and it has been picked up four times by South Americans (Ronaldo twice, Ronaldinho and Rivaldo once each) in the 11 polls since then. All were with European clubs, and the prospects of the award leaving European shores are still non-existent.

But in wanting to take on FIFA head to head in a jam-packed awards world it seems the *FF* accolade is losing its soul and identity.

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"We had some big names out there but they were not good enough on the night"

Rafa Benitez refuses to use rotation as a reason for defeat by Marseille

R for reasoned, not risky rotation

LET'S TALK the "R" word...after Rafa Benitez refused to blame rotation for Liverpool's surprise home defeat by Marseille in the Champions League.

He said: "Look at the team. We had some big names out there, but the ones we chose were not good enough on the night. You must give Marseille credit because they worked hard, were well-organised and didn't give away possession so easily."

The Spaniard said much the same thing early in his reign when a weakened Liverpool lost a cup scrap with Burnley. Bernd Schuster said much the same thing after Real Madrid only just staggered to victory over his old club Getafe, and then again after they threw away the prospect of beating Lazio in Rome in the Champions League.

However, surely one of the strengths of the old-fashioned concept of a settled team is that players understand one another's game from repetition and familiarity.

Mexico coach Hugo Sanchez recently acknowledged the importance of teamwork in his own idiosyncratic way. He demanded that his team should stop playing in green "because players, at speed, can 'lose' team-mates against the colour of the pitch".

Jose Mourinho may have rung plenty of changes before and during games but he maintained a firm backbone to his Chelsea team, not only in terms of individuals such as Petr Cech, John Terry and Frank Lampard but also the tactical and positional roles they filled.

That's "R" for reasoned rotation. Any other sort is "R for Risky" – as Benitez persists in proving. ●

Ouch...Gerrard is stunned as Marseille beat Liverpool

Mad for it

The majority of fired coaches are victims of rash club owners who know little about the game

TWELVE MONTHS ago, Zico was under heavy pressure in his new job at Fenerbahce. The Brazilian footballing legend was just starting to build a new team, constructed around some of his compatriots, and when they suffered a couple of poor results there was instant panic and a widespread fever for change among the fans and media in Istanbul.

The agitation was admirably resisted by the club's powerbrokers. They kept faith with Zico and were rewarded with a league title. Now, Fener, with Roberto Carlos added to the side, have made a strong start in the Champions League group stage, beating Internazionale at home in their opening game and then drawing away to CSKA Moscow.

I thought of Zico, who had previously been a success as coach of Japan, when four of the 32 coaches of Champions League group stage clubs left their jobs within a few days of each other.

Illustration by Dave Semple

Jose Mourinho (Chelsea), Gheorghe Hagi (Steaua Bucharest), Albert Emon (Marseille) and Anatoliy Demyanenko (Dynamo Kyiv) were all gone in a flash, victims of the madness of modern football.

Do ambitious clubs really not understand the indisputable truth of success – that managerial stability brings the greatest and most sustained rewards?

Do they not see the example of Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United? Of Arsene Wenger at Arsenal? Of Carlo Ancelotti at current European champions Milan? Of less celebrated examples such as Guy Roux and his 40 years at Auxerre, and Zico at Fenerbahce? Will they not stay loyal and let managers manage? No. Madness stirs everywhere.

It comes in different guises, of course, but it's madness all the same. At Chelsea and Steaua the problem has been interference by rich owners who believe that funding the club brings the right, and the ability, to pick the team.

Sporting illiteracy

Hagi quit the Romanian champions rather than be pushed around. Mourinho waited for his multi-million pound pay-off, but the cause was the same – owners with vast wealth but zero recognition of their own sporting illiteracy.

Emon and Demyanenko were classic victims of another curse – that of instant panic at a few poor results.

No matter that Emon had guided Marseille to second place in the French League last season and into the Champions League, where "his" players would soon win away at Liverpool. No matter that Demyanenko had won the Ukrainian title back for Dynamo after two years of missing out to Shakhtar Donetsk and is a legend at the club he captained for many years.

Dynamo replaced him with Josef Szabo, who did not immediately improve results. Szabo then took the players into tough training camps, and claimed: "I think they are making very good progress because I have taken them away from their women, their wives. We went to the training base because women in football are a scourge."

And does anyone believe that sanity now rules Dynamo's affairs?

There are particular circumstances at every football club, and some managerial sackings are both inevitable and sensible. The overall trend, however, is crazy.

There are three top-division clubs in the Greek city of Thessaloniki and all axed their coach after one match this season. In England, the highly competent Martin Jol has been completely undermined at Tottenham by a board offering his job to Sevilla's Juande Ramos and Mourinho while telling the world they have every confidence in Jol.

It's quite amazing when you stop to think about it. Do these fools really not understand the indisputable truth of football? Not even when it's on their own doorstep, as with Spurs in north London?

Spanish club Levante clearly don't. Coach Abel Resino was fired after a few early defeats. He had been appointed only in January and was a hero for his success in leading the small club away from what had looked like certain relegation last season. No matter, said the fools on the top of this little hill.

Michael Laudrup has experienced a difficult introduction at another La Liga club, Getafe, where he has been trying to instil his own philosophy having taken the place of Bernd Schuster, who left for Real Madrid. Laudrup had a similarly slow start at Brondby but the team grew strong and captured the Danish title.

Will Laudrup, a legend of the game, get the time now to prove himself? Will he get the Zico treatment? Or will he become one more needless broken victim of the immense, remorseless and vainglorious stupidity of the owners of professional football clubs? ●

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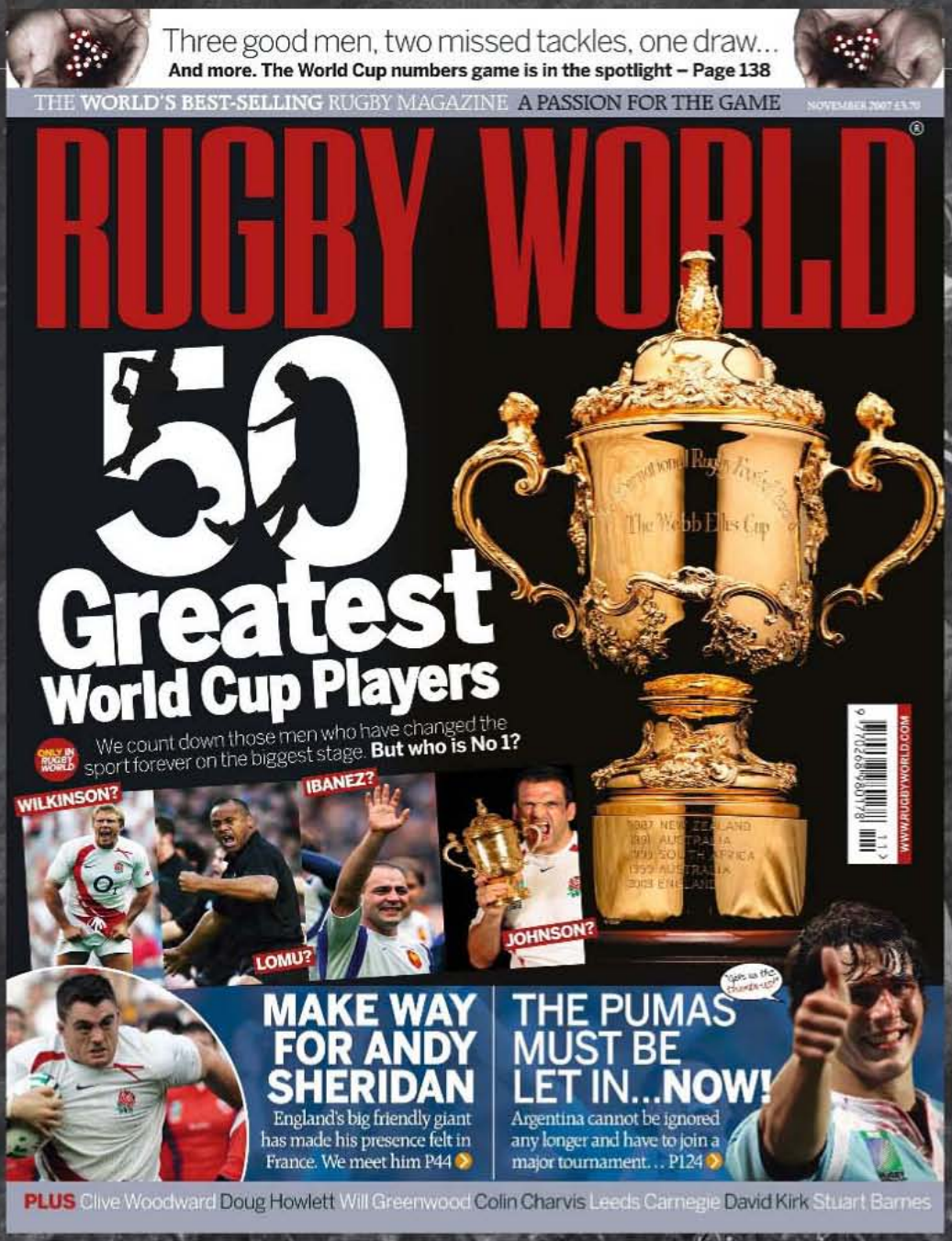

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Blue heaven...ecstatic Hertha fans celebrate their team's victory over Wolfsburg in a Bundesliga match

Wall story

Hertha have emerged as a success after years of turmoil and confusion in the football of post-war Berlin. Peterjon Cresswell reports

BERLIN WAS THE global footballing capital in 2006 when it hosted the World Cup Final, and the city's Hertha club have been in the top flight for the past 10 years. Hertha are based at the World Cup Final venue, built for the 1936 Olympics and renovated for last year, and their healthy league form has led to numerous appearances in Europe. They made a bright start to the current campaign and the visit of title favourites Bayern Munich on December 15 should be the game of the season at the old stadium.

But football in Berlin hasn't always been glamour and glitz; in the Cold War years it was darkened by physical division, corruption and financial troubles.

Berlin was in the vanguard of German football – a representative side met one from Hamburg in Germany's first inter-city match in 1896 and Berlin clubs Union 92 and Viktoria 89 won three national titles in total between 1905 and 1911. In the days before the Bundesliga, the German title was decided by means of regional championships and play-offs. Hertha, formed by a merger of the Berliner Sport-Club and Hertha Berliner Sport Club in 1920, reached the championship Final six seasons running in the 1920s and 1930s, winning two of them.

The club were based in the working-class district of Wedding, by Prenzlauer Berg – precisely where the Berlin Wall would be erected in 1961. The division between East and West had already created confusion in the immediate post-war period as the Allies and Soviets occupied different sectors of the city. Hertha were forbidden to play teams in what would become East Germany. These would form the Oberliga Berlin, merged into the new DDR-Liga in 1950-51. Hertha's cross-city rivals became Tennis Borussia Berlin, based at the Mommsenstadion in Charlottenburg near the Olympic stadium. Hertha moved into the main venue as one of the founders of the new West German national league, the Bundesliga, in 1963. Two years later it emerged Hertha had had to bribe players to join them in a paranoid, divided

> **Hertha were forbidden to play teams in the East and it emerged they had had to bribe players to join them in the paranoid and divided city**

and unattractive city. The West German FA, keen to keep West Berlin in the football family, made a point of using the Olympiastadion to stage national cup finals and internationals.

Meanwhile in the East a new force was emerging. After modest success in the 1950s as SC Dynamo, the club reformed as BFC Dynamo Berlin and came under the dubious patronage of Erich Mielke, head of the hated secret police, the Stasi. Mielke put pressure on referees to favour his team. Rumour has it that an announcement over the tannoy at an away match said: "Today we would like to welcome the players and officials of Dynamo Berlin and their referee." The so-called *Schiebemeister*, the cheating champions, won the East German title 10 seasons running, from 1979 to 1988, and in 1972 made the semi-finals of the European Cup-winners Cup,

Berlin ball...Lucio (top), Marko Pantelic and Andre Lima celebrate a Hertha goal against Borussia Dortmund

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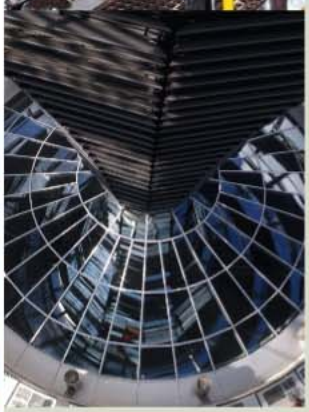
For better or wurst



● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT
Berlin has two main airports. Schonefeld is south-east of the centre, linked by train and S-Bahn metro (20-30 minutes). A one-way ticket (€2.70/£1.90) allows for any changes on the S-Bahn and U-Bahn lines or bus. A one-day pass is €6.30 (£4.40). Tegel airport is north-west of the centre, connected to Zoo, the main railway station in west Berlin, by X9 or 109 bus (35 mins, €2.50/£1.75). Details can be found at www.berlin-airport.de. The city's main central rail station is the completely revamped Lehrter Stadtbahnhof. Berlin's transport system (www.bvg.de) is divided into zones A (city centre), B and C. A basic single ticket is €2.10 (£1.45).

● HOTELS
Mid-range options include the Hotel Hackescher Markt (Grosse Prasidentenstrasse 8; +49 30 280 030; www.hackescher-markt.de; €150-200/£105-£140) and the Honigmond Garden Hotel (Invalidenstrasse 122; +49 30 281 0078; www.honigmond-berlin.de; €125/£85). The Artist Hotel-Pension Die Loge (Friedrichstrasse 115; +49 30 280 7513; www.artist-hotels.de; €70/£50) and the Kunstlerheim Luise (Luisenstrasse 19; +49 30 284 480; www.kuenstler-heim-luise.de; €100/£70) are good, cheaper alternatives. For hotel booking and information, contact Berlin Tourismus Marketing (Europa-Center, Budapester Strasse, Charlottenburg; +49 1805 754040; www.berlin.de).

● EATING & DRINKING
Prussian food is heavy and pork-laden. Sausages are ubiquitous, with wurst stands on every other corner, in a variety of sauces. For local cuisine, Gugelhof (pictured second bottom) (Knaackstrasse 37; +49 30 442 9229) offers quality at reasonable prices. The Kellerrestaurant im Brecht-Haus (Chausseestrasse 125; +49 30 282 3843) serves dishes made to recipes of Helene Weigel, partner of playwright Bertolt Brecht, whose memorabilia adorns the interior. Bars worth a visit include the Mitte Bar (Oranienburger Strasse 46; +49 30 283 3837), the Anker-Klause (Kottbusser Brucke; +49 30 693 5649) and the Holst Am Zoo (Joachimsthaler Strasse 1).

● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT
Museum Island (Museum-sinsel) is home to the Pergamonmuseum (Am Kupfergraben; +49 30 2090 5577; www.smb.spk-berlin.de), filled with treasures from antiquity. The Reichstag (bottom picture) (Platz der Republik; +49 30 2272 2152) is another popular destination.

● AFTER DARK
The landmark clubs are Tresor/Globus (Leipziger Strasse 126A) and the Kaffee Burger (Torstrasse 60).

losing to Dinamo Moscow – a case of the Stasi versus the KGB. Hertha were hardly squeaky clean either, thrown out of the Bundesliga in 1971 for their part in a match-fixing scandal. They bounced back to challenge the big boys in West Germany and make the semi-finals of the UEFA Cup in the late 1970s. Around the same time, Tennis Borussia made a couple of rare appearances in the top flight.

The fall of the Wall in 1989 and German reunification did not herald an instant revival of fortunes for the Berlin clubs. Tennis Borussia battled with financial problems before being refused a licence to play in the second division. The Violets are now in the Oberliga NOFV-Nord, one of the fourth-level divisions.

Dynamo, repackaged as FC Berlin, attracted a hard-core, right-wing skinhead following. They took the name BFC Dynamo in 1998, went bankrupt in 2002 but have climbed back to settle in the same league as Tennis Borussia.

Union flirted with financial collapse while fighting to make the second division, a feat they achieved in 2001. More remarkably, they reached the German Cup Final that year, losing to Schalke, and made a brief appearance in the UEFA Cup. After three seasons in Bundesliga 2, they fell back to the fourth level but now play to respectable crowds in the Regionalliga Nord, one of Germany's two third-level divisions.

The fact that Berlin has the fifth-largest Turkish population of any city in the world is reflected in the relative success of Turkiyemspor Berlin, a modest club of mainly Turkish immigrants playing in the same division as Tennis Borussia and Dynamo.

Hertha spent most of the Eighties in the second division and emerged as a serious force only in the mid-1990s. Their revival was backed by UFA, the audio-visual branch of the Berlin-based Bertelsmann media empire, who put Robert Schwan, the brains behind Bayern in the 1960s, in charge of the relaunch. Ten years on, Hertha may not have Bayern's massive fan base and success but they are a fixture in the top half of the Bundesliga, playing to full houses and able to give anyone a game – even mighty Bayern themselves. ●

Hoop-la...Union's Nenad Vukovic

THE STADIUMS

The Olympiastadion

The Friedrich Ludwig Jahn Sportpark

Olympic spirit

The Olympiastadion (www.olympiastadion-berlin.de), home ground of Hertha Berlin and also the national stadium, holds 76,000. It staged three games during the 1974 World Cup and six in 2006, including the Final, and hosts the German Cup Final and internationals. It is set in huge grounds built as a vast sports complex for the 1936 Olympics. The Marathon Gate with its clock tower remain in place after the recent overhaul, during which the pitch was lowered, roof extended and lighting upgraded.

The venue has its own stations on the red U2 line and S5 and S75 S-Bahn lines. For Hertha games, book tickets via www.ticketmaster.de. The cheapest ones are at the Marathontor end (€21.50-24.50/£15-17). Gegentribune tickets are €26.50-49.50 (£18.50-34.50) and those in the main Haupttribune €39.50-69.50 (£27.50-48.50).

Union play at the sparse, 18,000-capacity Alte Forsterei, a short walk from Kopenick on the S3 line. Its clubhouse bar, Abseitsfalle (offside trap), is the best of its kind in Berlin. Dynamo and Turkiyemspor use the Sportforum Hohenschonhausen (trams 5, 15 or 23 from Frankfurter Allee or Landsberger Allee on the S8/S10 lines) and the nearby, larger Friedrich Ludwig Jahn Sportpark next to Eberswalder Strasse on the U2 line.

Tennis Borussia play at the Mommsenstadion (named after Nobel prize-winning historian Theodor Mommsen), near Eichkamp on the S5 and S75 lines.

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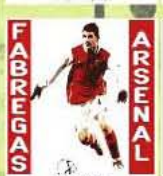

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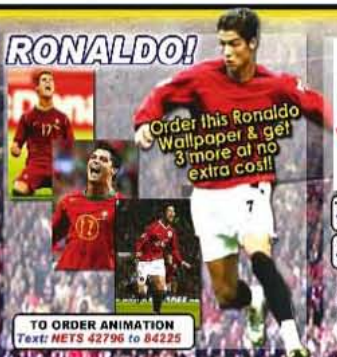

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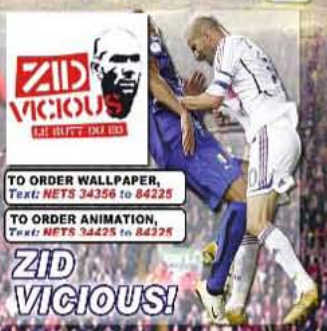

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WORLD SERVICE

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No quarter given...Kerstin Stegemann scythes into Kong Hye-ok of North Korea as eventual winners Germany make it into the women's World Cup semi-finals

Germany stay on top

A RECORD-BREAKING women's World Cup in the world's most populous nation delivered plenty of surprises (some welcome, others not), but there were none in the Final as Germany retained the trophy with a 2-0 defeat of Brazil.

The opening game was, thankfully, misleading. The holders' 11-0 destruction of Argentina was far from representative of an increasingly professional, sophisticated and competitive international women's game. The gaps between the best teams and the good teams is appreciably smaller and the technical standard is rising all the time.

Questions remain about the quality of goalkeeping. Keepers from Argentina, Ghana and even Briana Scurry of third-placed United States delivered performances they would like to forget. Having said that, German keeper Nadine Angerer was by far the best player of the Final, so hope exists.

The past three winners, Norway, the United States and Germany, all reached the semi-finals once again, with only Brazil, who defeated the USA 4-0 to reach the decider, posing a genuine threat to the "old guard". The speed and flair of Marta, Daniela and Cristiane up front lit up the tournament, and the South Americans deserved their most entertaining team award. Next time they need to add a killer instinct. For all their improved teamwork, they remain a collection of great individuals rather than a great side.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter was among those praising the improved technical skills and tactical sophistication evident almost across the board. Argentina, Ghana and New Zealand were the clear minnows but most others were closely matched in the battle to reach the knockout stages.

Dark horses North Korea did not come good – they had strength and speed but not a finishing touch. England gave a much-improved showing and were the only team to stop Germany from scoring, pleasing for an FA that has devoted significant time and resources in the past six years. Norway aside, Scandinavia had a disappointing event as Denmark and Sweden both crashed out in the first round. Hosts China blew hot and cold.

More support

Brazil were an interesting case study for the women's game. As the players collected their silver medals, two of them held up a banner begging for more support from their federation. The opportunistic announcement from the Brazilian federation, the CBF, of a new women's league was greeted with glee by Blatter, who had faced criticism days before about the CBF's treatment of its women's team. The league announcement aroused a little more scepticism in the Brazilian media, who claimed the plan is far too sketchy to take seriously.

FIFA's fourth women's symposium, held in Shanghai just before the Final, tried to address the issues of sustaining and developing interest in the women's game. There are firm foundations on which to build, with near-capacity crowds across China and high TV audiences all over the world. The Final was watched by a record TV audience, including 9.5 million in Germany, more than the top German rating in the

Top stopper...Germany keeper Nadine Angerer, the player of the Final, saves a penalty from Brazil's Marta

Old habits...fans dressed as Qing dynasty soldiers and a Red Guard cheer on hosts China

2005-06 Champions League. A record number of broadcasters picked up the tournament. In the UK, for example, BBC1 broadcast a women's match for the first time.

The symposium offered concrete examples about how to develop clear, strategic plans for development, from Namibia to New Zealand. FIFA's funding allocation for women's football is to be doubled, from 10 to 20 per cent. There will always be calls for more money, but games such as the England v Germany quarter-final, the Brazil v Denmark group game and the Final show that the women's game is not merely a sideshow to the main event of the men's game.

In fact, the men's game could learn a few things from the women's. It is a long time since there was a men's World Cup with no straight sendings-off, and yet there were none at this tournament. Only the Brazilian players' histrionics when tackled blighted the overwhelming sense of fair play. There was no crowding of the referees, no spitting and no serious injuries caused by foul play. A whole new ball game.

The local organising committee will be happy to claim a similarly clean record for themselves. Stadiums were nearly full. That in large part may have been down to block bookings and discounted tickets for schoolchildren but, in this context, that was no bad thing. Home fans entered into the spirit of the tournament with volume and enthusiasm. This being China, there was some disappointing booing of the Japanese national anthem and even some of their players. It echoed the trouble caused when China hosted the men's Asian Cup finals in 2005, and the issue needs serious attention ahead of next year's Olympics in Beijing.

Better planning

Blatter has said that from all he has seen he is in no doubt that China could, if it chose, bid to host the men's World Cup. Perhaps. Better English signage and communication would be necessary. And the combined logistics of the largest single-sport event in the world would certainly require better contingency planning than shown in the confused handling of fixture changes because of typhoon Wipha.

There was also a largely uninvestigated "spying" scandal, with a Denmark training session disrupted ahead of the opening group game against China. Journalists in Hangzhou also reported receiving uncomfortably close supervision from the local authorities. The eyes of a larger portion of the world will be much less forgiving at larger events such as the Olympics and any future men's World Cup.

But all this should not detract from the success of the tournament, which, it will be hoped, will prove a good stepping stone to obtaining more recognition for the women's game across the world day by day. Not merely every four years.

Lyndon Radnedge

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THE BEST...

PLAYER: Marta (Brazil), but perhaps she could pass the ball a little more next time.

FANS: Ghana for the singing and the dancing.

MASCOT: England's panda.

PREDICTION: "Do you want to know who will get the trophy? The winner!" – Sepp Blatter.

HEADLINE: "Come on, Brazil?" – from the local sports daily after China had been utterly humiliated, 4-0, by the South Americans in the group stage yet in the knowledge that a Brazilian victory against Denmark in the final game would send the hosts through.

Taking the eye...Marta

THE WORST...

GAME: Germany 11 Argentina 0 – set the tournament off on completely the wrong foot.

FANS: The Chinese who booed Japanese anthem and players.

PITCH: The one at Shanghai's Hongkou stadium before it was relaid just before the Final.

ORGANISATION: The stuttering rescheduling of the final group games because of typhoon Wipha.

EXCUSE: "Due to typhoon Wipha, we change the way to provide press conferences passes" – Hangzhou Dragon stadium.

TEAM CHANGE: The USA's decision to drop goalkeeper Hope Solo for the semi-final against Brazil and a 4-0 defeat.

Sitting it out...USA keeper Hope Solo is demoted to the bench for the semi-final

FRANCE

Bad times for Emon

Losing battle...Emon was unable to halt Marseille's slide in Ligue 1 this season

ALBERT EMON must have been tearing his hair out on the evening of October 3. Marseille, the club he had been managing until eight days earlier, were beating Liverpool at Anfield in the Champions League, and the players who had so consistently underperformed for him in the French championship were strolling around as if they owned the place.

On the day the axe had fallen on Emon, Marseille were a pitiful 16th in Ligue 1 with just seven points from nine games. But on Merseyside, with no-nonsense Belgian Eric Gerets now at the helm, Marseille won 1-0 to stay top of Champions League Group A, having beaten Besiktas 2-0 at home in the first group game, Emon's second last match in charge.

At the start of the season Marseille, with a host of new signings, had been tipped to be Lyon's most troublesome challengers for the domestic title. So what had gone so wrong for Emon, who had unexpectedly steered the club into the Champions League after a dazzling late run last season, when they won their last six games to finish runners-up?

Rumours that the coach had "lost" the dressing room seemed to be confirmed by the fact that a number of players were heard laughing, joking and playing loud music at the very moment he was being given his cards at the club's La Commanderie headquarters. But exactly how a group featuring players of the calibre of Djibril Cisse, Boudewijn Zenden, Samir Nasri, Gael Givet and Karim Ziani could be so unremittingly awful in a championship by no means the toughest in Europe remains a mystery.

When Emon was relieved of his duties, sporting director Jose Anigo and president Pape Diouf were quick to pay tribute to his qualities. In fact, he has even been reintegrated into the club as a scout.

Gerets, a former Belgium right-back, has a good coaching pedigree having already won titles in three different countries (see Headliners, page 21). His credentials will be well and truly underlined if he can pull off the same trick in France with a club as volatile as Marseille. In typical fashion, the team lost their first game after the joy of Anfield, the 1-0 defeat at Saint-Etienne sending them into the relegation zone.

In contrast, Lyon had a calamitous night in the Champions League, trounced 3-0 at home by Rangers, but then beat fellow high-fliers Bordeaux 3-1 away. "We were completely outclassed," Bordeaux boss Laurent Blanc admitted. "Lyon gave us a lesson."

Paris Saint-Germain were only four points and four places above Marseille after an embarrassing 3-1 defeat by Rennes at Parc des Princes, where the team had yet to win in the league this season.

"What on earth are they doing at PSG?" was the headline of a particularly coruscating article in *L'Equipe*, and it is a question to which no one, least of all coach Paul Le Guen, seems to have an answer.

"Paris needs players with character," Le Guen said after the game. But surely it is his job to find them.

Howard Johnson

Hand me the job...but Werder Bremen keeper Tim Wiese criticised his rivals, which did not go down well with Germany coach Joachim Low

GERMANY

Battle for No 1

TWO YEARS after Oliver Kahn and Jens Lehmann battled acrimoniously for the favours of then Germany coach Jurgen Klinsmann to be given the goalkeeping shirt, a new war of words has broken out about the position.

Klinsmann's successor, Joachim Low, may well have to look elsewhere after Lehmann, first-choice in recent times, was relegated to the Arsenal bench following early-season howlers and his deputy, Timo Hildebrand, looked far from certain of prevailing in his battle with Santiago Canizares for the starting spot at Valencia. Already the candidates and their supporters are jockeying aggressively for position.

Werder Bremen keeper Tim Wiese, disinclined to hide his light under a bushel, kick-started the electioneering by publicly criticising many of his rivals and claiming he was the natural choice.

That was a clear own goal. "I didn't like hearing him openly attacking other keepers," Low said. "It was disparaging and lacking in respect."

Meanwhile, Bayer Leverkusen sports director Rudi Voller has lobbied for his club's No 1, Rene Adler, who is among the crop of young Bundesliga keepers favoured by Bayern Munich general manager Uli Hoeness. "I'd pick from Adler, Manuel Neuer of Schalke or our own Michael Rensing [the reserve keeper who has been ably deputising for the injured Kahn this autumn]," Hoeness said. "All the others such as Robert Enke you can forget."

Enke, 30, and a regular in the Germany squad for the past year, was naturally unappreciative of Hoeness' intervention. The Hannover keeper said: "I don't mind him pushing his players but some of what he said showed he'd lost all manners and decency."

Bayern Munich's dominance of the Bundesliga apart, this season's campaign has been full of surprises, including the rapid decline of champions Stuttgart, Nurnberg's transformation from force to be reckoned with to defensive pushovers, and Eintracht Frankfurt's vast improvement. But no team has railed against the old order like promoted Karlsruhe. Back in the top flight for the first time since 1998, the south-western club have proved remarkably competitive, strong enough even to win 2-0 at fortress Schalke and to force their way into the upper reaches of the table.

There is no particular secret to Karlsruhe's success. The aces they hold are the organisational flair of coach Edmond Becker, the resilience and energy of his players, and their ability to turn defence into attack in an instant. Becker's description of his side as a unit without stars might not be valid for much longer, at least not if central defenders Mario Eggimann and Maik Franz, adventurous right-back Andreas Gorlitz – on loan from Bayern – and brilliant little Hungarian playmaker Tamas Hajnal keep up the good work.

Nick Bidwell

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

BELGIUM

Trouble down below

Above their station...Sofiene El Khadri in action as Namur enjoy second division football for the first time in 40 years

STANDARD LIEGE'S bright, unbeaten start in the top flight was completely overshadowed by the chaos in the second division, the repercussions of which will be felt all season.

The fiasco began last May after Verbroedering Geel beat Namur in the third division promotion play-offs. The losers complained that Geel had received a licence to play in the second division contrary to regulations, since they had debts of over £2million. Namur then refused to begin the new season in the third division as they were taking the matter through the courts. A week's entire programme of matches was cancelled in the second and third divisions as the clubs voted for Geel to be immediately relegated to the third division and replaced by Namur. The federation then decided that both clubs should compete in division two and a new fixture programme was published. Meanwhile, Geel fans staged a protest at Lommel's ground, where Namur were playing their first second division game in 40 years, a 1-1 draw.

The new fixtures were a nightmare since the Belgian FA had, in their wisdom, included games that had already been played. English groundhoppers planning trips to Belgium were among those warned to be on their guard and check that the games they planned to see had not already taken place.

At the clubs' behest and due to the chaos, it was then decided that the "period" system would not be employed this season to determine which clubs would enter the end-of-season promotion play-offs. Normally, the club gaining most points in each of three blocks of matches during the campaign go into the play-offs (apart from the automatically-promoted champions). The three promotion candidates are usually pitted against the second bottom side from the top flight. This time round, the clubs finishing second to fifth in the overall second division table will enter the play-offs, while both the bottom two from the top flight will be relegated automatically.

Standard won seven of their first nine league games, drawing the other two, to take a five-point lead over Club Brugge in the championship race. However, both the top two failed to reach the UEFA Cup group stage after losing to Zenit St Petersburg and Brann Bergen respectively. That left defending champions Anderlecht as Belgium's sole remaining European representatives following a 2-1 aggregate defeat of Rapid Wien in the UEFA Cup.

Nicholas Harling

SWITZERLAND

Basle on top

Basle took advantage of champions Zurich's 2-2 draw at Lucerne to take top spot with a 3-0 defeat of St Gallen the following day. Basle also reached the UEFA Cup group stage with an 8-1 aggregate thrashing of Sarajevo and stayed on course to retain the domestic Cup when walloping lower league Lechelles Fribourg 9-0.

The squad has been boosted by the arrival of national team defender David Degen on loan from Monchengladbach. The deal came after Basle president Gigi Oeri yielded following initial resistance to coach Christian Gross's request for reinforcements.

St Gallen fired coach Rolf Fringer after a 4-0 home defeat by Thun sent them to the foot of the table. Fringer, a former coach of the national team, had taken charge of St Gallen last year.

National coach Kobi Kuhn was unable to explain how his side managed to throw away a 2-0 half-time lead to lose 4-3 to Japan in the recent friendly tournament in Austria. "It would appear we fell asleep after the break," was all he could come up with. Switzerland beat Chile 2-1 in their other game.

Ivar von Rulach

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Derry's cup hat-trick

An extra-time goal by Kevin McHugh gave Derry City a 1-0 victory over Bohemians in the League Cup Final, their third successive triumph in the competition. Normally, the League Cup winners automatically take one of the UEFA Cup places, but this year the FA decided they will have to play-off against the first division (second level) champions to decide the spot in Europe.

Drogheda United have closed in on the championship, leading Cork City by eight points with five games remaining.

Two clubs have introduced novel free-entry offers for home games, though they served more to bring publicity than swell the crowd. Dublin side Shamrock Rovers have been giving free admittance to all taxi drivers after claiming that all the capital's cabbies are former followers of The Hoops. St Patrick's Athletic offered free admission to anybody who brought one of their grandmothers.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Gaspar among the goals

A hat-trick from Brazilian Gaspar de Souza helped Vaduz to a 5-2 defeat of Chiasso to keep the club among the front runners in the Swiss Challenge League (second division). The latest arrival at Vaduz is Italian, former Chievo defender Giuseppe Aquaro, previously with Bellinzona.

Graeme Crawford

Deserved call-up...Bosingwa

AUSTRIA

Klinsi in for Trap?

What are we doing?...Trapattoni is coming under pressure at Salzburg

GIOVANNI TRAPATTONI, the coach of ambitious champions Salzburg, was under increasing pressure after the team's miserable European campaign and having dropped to fifth in the 10-team domestic league. Jurgen Klinsmann, the former German national team coach, has been touted as a possible replacement.

The veteran Italian had had high hopes of fulfilling the goal of owner Dietrich Mateschitz to see Salzburg in the Champions League group stage, but they lost to Shakhtar Donetsk in the third qualifying round and then to AEK Athens in the UEFA Cup first round. Back-to-back defeats in the Bundesliga, at home to leaders Austria Wien and away to LASK Linz, left Salzburg seven points off the top after 14 rounds.

Sporting director Heinz Hochhauser has called for action, saying: "The way our team are playing you cannot win. The time has come to sit down and work out a new plan of action."

That "new plan" could include the sacking of Trapattoni, the world's most successful coach, while there were rumours that Hochhauser had been urged by Franz Beckenbauer, Salzburg's advisor and a personal friend of Mateschitz, to contact Klinsmann about taking the post. Beckenbauer has a long-standing relationship with the former Germany striker having coached him at Bayern Munich and as national team boss. Ties were strengthened when Beckenbauer was head of the organising committee for the 2006 World Cup, when "Klinsi" was Germany coach.

Harry Miltner

PORTUGAL

Porto feel 100 per cent

CHAMPIONS PORTO beat Academica 1-0 to make it seven successive league wins from the start of the season and give them a commanding seven-point lead over Sporting Lisbon and Maritimo. The defence has been one of the leaders' strong points, conceding only one goal during the run, and right-back Jose Bosingwa earned a national team call-up.

Benfica were also still unbeaten but had drawn four in a row before managing a 2-1 win at Uniao Leiria.

Boavista, accustomed to fighting for a European place, were in the relegation zone after taking only four points, all from draws. The poor start led to the resignation of president Joao Loureiro after 10 years in charge.

Pedro Pinto

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

NORWAY

It's Brann's party

BRANN EFFECTIVELY ended their 44-year wait for a league title when beating Lyn 3-1 in front of a capacity home crowd on October 8. The result gave the Bergen club a nine-point lead over Stabaek with three games remaining, and the fans certainly felt confident enough to spend the night celebrating in the streets. The club had won the title only twice before, in consecutive years (1962 and 1963).

Questions had been raised about Brann's title ambitions when they sold Bengt Saeternes and Ardian Gashi in the summer, but they also made the astute signings of Azar Karadas and Hassan El Fakiri. Wins over Stabaek (3-0) and two other title challengers, Rosenborg (3-2) and Lillestrom (5-1 away), during the second half of the season were key to the triumph.

Brann's success was based on a strong spine of goalkeeper Hakon Opdal, central defender Kristjan Sigurdsson, midfielder and captain Martin Andresen and striker Thorstein Helstad, while wide men Jan Gunnar Solli and Petter Vaagan Moen have also been in terrific form.

Brann reached the UEFA Cup group stage a few days before the Lyn game with an away goals defeat of Club Brugge.

Sandefjord were the first club to be relegated. Fellow strugglers Odd Grenland parted company with coaches Arne Sandsto and Gaute Larsen and brought in Dane Ove Flindt Bjerg but also seemed certain to go down.

Benny Lennartson, the replacement for Stig Inge Bjornebye at Start, won three of his first four matches in charge to pull the team clear of the automatic relegation zone.

Sigurd Odegaard

Champion feeling...Brann striker Azar Karadas celebrates as his side close in on the title

DENMARK

A+ for AaB

AaB Aalborg delivered one of the best results for Danish football in European competition by knocking Sampdoria out of the UEFA Cup to reach the group stage. Rade Prica and Andreas Johansson scored in a fine 2-2 draw away in the first leg. Back home, a doughty 0-0 draw gave AaB an away goals victory. FC Copenhagen also reached the group stage, by beating Lens 3-2, and remained top of the table at home with 25 points from 12 games despite showing some indifferent form.

Former champions Brondby moved out of the relegation zone after finally ending their long, miserable run of away defeats with a 2-1 victory at Viborg.

Jim Holden

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FINLAND

Petrescu impresses

National Under-21 striker Tomi Petrescu caught the eye of foreign scouts after impressing for champions Tampere United during their gallant run in Europe. Petrescu, whose father is Romanian, showed a glimpse of his potential with a brilliant long-range goal against Bordeaux in the UEFA Cup first round.

Tampere, who reached the Champions League third qualifying round, when they lost to Rosenborg of Norway, led Bordeaux 2-1 at home after 90 minutes, but conceded two sloppy goals in added time. Their run came to an end after they managed only a 1-1 draw in the return.

Fulham goalkeeper Antti Niemi has made a surprise international comeback, though he insists it is only as cover for Jussi Jaaskelainen. The 35-year-old had announced his retirement in 2005 after winning his 66th cap.

HJK Helsinki's new coach will be Antti Muurinen, formerly in charge of Lahti. Muurinen will be replaced by Ilkka Makela, who was sacked by MyPa earlier this season.

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

Valur scramble past FH

Valur snatched their first league title for 20 years in a dramatic end to the season after inflicting a 2-0 home defeat on leaders and defending champions FH in the penultimate round. The result put the Reykjavik side on top and they held on by beating lowly HK 1-0 at home on the final day.

FH were within touching distance of a fourth consecutive title but lost ground the week before the Valur game when beaten 4-3 at Breidablik. Until the defeat by Valur, the Hafnarfjordur club had been top for no fewer than 60 matches, stretching back to July 2004.

Vikingur were condemned to relegation after their 3-1 home defeat by FH on the last day. Only one club go down because the top flight is being expanded from 10 teams to 12.

FH gained some consolation for their title loss by winning the Cup for the first time. They beat newly-promoted Fjolnir 2-1 after extra-time. Fjolnir, formed only in 1988, will be joined in the top flight by fellow Reykjavik club Throttur and Grindavik, who bounced back at the first time of asking as second level champions.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

Levadia close in

Levadia Tallinn took a big step towards retaining the league title when thrashing closest challengers TVMK 6-2 away at the end of September. The defending champions led by six points with four rounds remaining.

Andres Must

LATVIA

Ventspils revival

Defending champions Ventspils, who looked to be out of the title race in August, got to within five points of leaders Metalurgs Liepaja and with a game in hand after winning seven games in a row. The two have also reached the Final of the first Baltic League tournament.

Andres Must

WALES

Guilsfield the giantkillers

Second level Guilsfield were the giantkillers of the Welsh Cup second round when beating top division Airbus UK 3-2 after extra-time. Porthmadog's home defeat by Welshpool prompted the sacking of manager Clayton Blackmore, the former Wales defender. Viv Williams, who co-managed the club last season, has retaken the reins.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Looking good

The Cliftonville-Linfield game on the opening day of the season became the first local league match to be shown live on television, on Sky, and proved a good advert for the Irish League, which desperately needs positive coverage to attract more spectators. A rip-roaring, see-saw affair ended 2-2.

Cliftonville manager Eddie Patterson, no stranger to controversy, had to watch from the stand as he served the final match of a lengthy touchline ban for "remarks to referees". Just over a week later Patterson was slapped with another suspension, of eight weeks, after being reported by referee Brian Turkington for an outburst following a bad-tempered County Antrim Shield semi-final, which Cliftonville lost 2-1 to Glentoran. Patterson had to be dissuaded from resigning after his latest punishment, having stated: "I am not doing the club any good."

Roy Kitson

Hooray Henrik...Larsson hits Heerenveen

SCOTLAND

Feelgood factor is back

THE COUNTRY'S footballing stock is at a 40-year high after the national team's Euro 2008 wins away to France and home to Ukraine, Celtic's 2-1 defeat of Milan and Rangers' 3-0 win over Lyon in the Champions League, and Aberdeen's defeat of Ukrainians Dnipro to reach the UEFA Cup group stage. True, the national team proceeded to lose 2-0 to Georgia, but even so things have not looked this good since 1967, when Celtic won the European Cup, Rangers reached the Cup-winners Cup Final and Scotland beat world champions England at Wembley.

Hibernian undercut the Old Firm's showing in Europe by beating both in the space of two weeks. Hibs briefly led the table but Celtic reclaimed top spot with a streaky 2-1 win at bottom side Gretna.

Alan Fairley

Jump to it...Lee McCulloch (No 27) heads Rangers in front in Lyon

SWEDEN

Helsingborgs hit heights

HELSINGBORGS provided the biggest positive surprise in Swedish soccer this autumn by reaching the UEFA Cup group stage with an 8-6 aggregate defeat of Dutch side Heerenveen.

It has been a troublesome season for Stuart Baxter's side, who, with Henrik Larsson leading the attack, had been tipped to challenge for the league title. However, they have never got into their stride and hardly been able to field the same side in consecutive games.

Helsingborgs lost 5-3 in the first leg in Heerenveen but progressed after a 5-1 win in the return in one of the best showings of recent years by a Swedish club in continental competition.

IFK Gothenburg and Djurgardens were neck and neck at the top of the League with two games to go. Malmo, who dropped to ninth after a 2-0 home defeat by Gothenburg, will lose coach Soren Akerby at the end of the season.

IFK Norrkoping, one of the traditional forces of the Swedish game, are back in the top division after an absence of five seasons.

Pentti Hietanen

SERBIA

Stojkovic makes sudden exit

Tired out...Stojkovic cited fatigue as his reason for stepping down as Red Star president

DRAGAN STOJKOVIC surprisingly quit as president of Red Star Belgrade after just two years at the helm and with the team having won back-to-back Doubles and just secured their place in the UEFA Cup group stage. The former international cited fatigue for his decision, though there were rumours of internal conflicts.

Stojkovic made his announcement two weeks after Red Star had held league leaders Partizan to a 2-2 draw away in one of the best derbies of recent years. The bad behaviour of a section of Partizan fans, which included racist abuse of Red Star's Senegalese defender Ibrahim Gueye and a pitch invasion, resulted in the club being forced to play their next home game behind closed doors.

Partizan, who had kicked off with six straight wins, also managed only a draw away to Smederevo the week after the derby to see their lead cut to five points by Vojvodina.

Tomislav Karadzic, a powerful businessman and experienced football administrator, has been elected president of Partizan. Karadzic was president of the Serbo-Montenegrin FA in 2005-06.

The coaching merry-go-round has been in full flow. Milovan Rajevac resigned at Vojvodina and was replaced by Ivica Brzic, who was previously in charge as far back as 1990-91. Bezanija are on to their third coach of the season – Ljubisa Stamenkovic – following the sacking of Ratko Dostanic after just four games. Hajduk Kula's Zarko Soldo resigned, but his replacement, Mihajlo Bosnjak, was in charge for only five days because he did not hold the appropriate licence. That was the same story with Zvonko Petrovic, who had taken over at Napredak in a caretaker capacity following the sacking of Mladen Dodic.

Vladimir Novak

ALBANIA

Management crisis

Sulejman Starova lost his job as coach of champions FK Tirana just four games into his latest spell at the club after the team made one of the poorest starts in their history. And the coaching situation caused a crisis within the club that almost led to the departure of one of the main backers.

Starova, who led Tirana to the championship in 2005 during his previous reign, tendered his resignation after a 4-2 defeat at Skenderbeu, their second loss in three games. "If everyone thinks I am the problem with this team then I am leaving," said Starova, who had returned to Tirana in June after a year in charge of Teuta.

However, his resignation was rejected by two of the club's four main backers, prompting another, Refik Halili, to threaten to walk out in protest. An emergency meeting was then called at which the board elected to dismiss Starova after all, much to the coach's surprise. "No one has told me anything yet," he complained. "The spoiled players on the team run the show, not the coach or the sponsors." The coach added that "the big money-makers" are one of the big problems at Tirana.

Halili gave a dismissive response, saying: "I earn €2,000 [£1,400] a day from my commercial activities. I don't have time to lose with men like Starova."

Former national coach Astrit Hazifi was installed as Starova's replacement but immediately felt the pressure after a 3-1 defeat at Besa and a 0-0 draw at home to Vllaznia in his first two games. The results left Tirana in the bottom half of the table with only four points from six games.

Gezim Nushi

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MONTENEGRO

Open door

Mirko Vucinic scored Montenegro's first goal from open play in the team's fifth international, the September friendly against Sweden in Podgorica. The Roma striker put his side ahead in the 15th minute, but the Swedes hit back to win 2-1.

Champions Zeta extended their home winning run to 18 league games when beating Lovcen 1-0 to go three points clear at the top.

Vladimir Novak

MACEDONIA

Rabotnicki in the clear

Rabotnicki took a five-point lead in the League after beating closest challengers, promoted Milano, 2-1 away in the ninth round. Rabotnicki, runners-up last season, had their UEFA Cup run brought to an end by Bolton in the first round.

Nikola Kostov was expected to be named as general secretary of the federation. The post was vacant following the resignation of Lazar Mitrovski, who was accused of faking a diploma he said he held when applying for the job.

Michel Stojmanovski

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Jelic's death a big blow

The death of federation president Milan Jelic from a heart attack is a big blow to the game in the country. The 51-year-old, who was also president of leading club side Modrica, was a well-respected figure, renowned for his work for the League and his diplomatic skills.

Defending champions Sarajevo were only 10th after nine games, prompting the dismissal of coach Husref Musemic.

Zdravko Reic

SLOVENIA

Interblock sign up controversial athlete

Top-flight Interblock have controversially signed leading Slovenian athlete Jolanda Ceplak, currently under suspicion of illegal drug-taking, as their conditioning coach. Ceplak, who won bronze in the 800m at the Athens Olympics, recently tested positive for a banned substance at a meeting in Monaco. She agreed to take up her new post, on a two-year contract, after all her sponsors turned their back on her.

Auxerre's Denis Petric, one of the most talented young keepers in Europe, has said he will no longer play for Slovenia's national youth team. "I was born in Ljubljana [the Slovenian capital] but my parents are Serbs," he explained. "My heart beats stronger when I hear the Serbian anthem."

Zdravko Reic

ISRAEL

Beitar still best

Champions Beitar Jerusalem are again setting the pace after taking 13 points from their first five games. Both the big Tel Aviv sides, Maccabi and Hapoel, made dreadful starts having finished third and fourth respectively last term. Maccabi were bottom after four defeats and a draw, while Hapoel were also winless and had just three points.

Ori Lewis

MALTA

Floriana flourish

Unheralded Floriana were the league leaders after seven rounds, lying three points clear of Sliema Wanderers and champions Marsaxlokk. Much of the credit must go to new coach Danilo Doncic, formerly a prolific striker with Valletta and Sliema.

Domenico Aquilina

Flesh tone...Mamic stripped at Zagreb airport

GREECE

Olympiakos up and away

PERENNIAL CHAMPIONS Olympiakos have for many years failed to transfer their domestic form to the European stage, but their 3-1 win away to Werder Bremen in the second round of Champions League group matches suggests they could finally be about to break the spell. It was also the first time Olympiakos had won away in the competition after 32 attempts.

"The win will give us some breathing space but now we have to look forward to the next game," said coach Takis Lemonis. "Olympiakos have the foundations of a very good team, anyone who knows about football can see that. We still have a long way to go. But it was very important for us to give our fans something to smile about."

There was a lot of joy for other Greek clubs in Europe, too, as all five UEFA Cup representatives advanced to the group stage, the largest contingent of any country. Aris Salonika and Larisa put in particularly impressive showings, against Zaragoza and Blackburn respectively. Panionios, AEK Athens and Panathinaikos were the other teams to progress.

AEK were riding high in the League after winning their first four games, and without conceding a goal.

Lou Economopoulos

Jumping for joy...Christos Patsatzoglou celebrates his goal against Werder

CROATIA

Dinamo undo Ajax

DINAMO ZAGREB surprisingly managed to overturn their 1-0 home first leg defeat by Ajax in the UEFA Cup, reaching the group stage on away goals after a 3-2 win in Amsterdam. Dinamo had even been 3-0 ahead at one stage. Controversial owner Zdravko Mamic was clearly in party mood at Zagreb airport on the squad's return, stripping down to his underpants in a novel celebratory display.

Dinamo have also been doing well in the domestic league, winning 10 of their first 11 games to establish a seven-point lead on second-placed Rijeka. In contrast, arch-rivals Hajduk Split have been in crisis after picking up only 16 points despite bringing in several big-name players over the summer. Coach Ivan Pudar was sacked and replaced by Sergije Kresic, who has worked in Spain for 20 years. Meanwhile, president Branko Grgic also quit after seven years at the helm.

Zdravko Reic

CZECH REPUBLIC

Repka's TV nasty

SPARTA PRAGUE captain Tomas Repka was banned for seven domestic games for striking a TV cameraman after being sent off near the end of a 2-1 league defeat at Teplice. Repka had received a second yellow card after verbally abusing referee Radek Kocian for sending Sparta coach Michal Bilek to the stands for dissent. As the defender headed to the dressing room, he lashed out at the cameraman.

In the chaotic scenes that followed, Bilek's assistant, Horst Siegl, and already-substituted Sparta midfielder Martin Abraham were also sent off. Abraham received a four-game ban, Siegl a four-game touchline ban and Bilek was fined £1,250. The FA's disciplinary commission also fined the club £17,580 and, in addition to suspending Repka, stripped him of the captaincy for 15 months. The FA's refereeing commission suspended Kocian for three games because of mistakes he made during the match.

Sparta also lost 2-0 at home to Slavia in the Prague derby, during which they had another player sent off – Pavel Horvath, formerly with Slavia. Daniel Pudil and Zdenek Senkerik gave Slavia their first win at the Letna since 1993, which put them two points clear of Teplice at the top.

Mlada Boleslav, under new coach Zdenek Scasny, achieved an outstanding result when beating Palermo on penalties to reach the UEFA Cup group stage. Slovan Liberec and Jablonec sacked their respective coaches, Michal Zach and Lubos Kozel, following poor starts to the season.

Sam Beckwith

Losing the plot...Repka must serve a seven-game ban and has been stripped of the Sparta captaincy for 15 months after lashing out at a TV cameraman

RUSSIA

CSKA unseated

CSKA Moscow's chances of winning a third successive league title virtually disappeared after a controversial 2-1 defeat at Zenit St Petersburg in the sixth last round.

Referee Claus Bo Larsen failed to spot a hand-ball by a Zenit player in the build-up to their late second goal, but although the Premier League's inspectors committee acknowledged that the Dane had made a mistake, the result stood. Larsen was the 17th foreign official in three seasons to take charge of a Russian league game as part of the federation's "unbiased refereeing" campaign.

Zenit's victory kept them top, but Spartak Moscow drew level with four games to play after beating Spartak Nalchik away following Zenit's defeat at Lokomotiv Moscow.

Rostov were certain to go down after taking only 14 points from their first 26 games. They will be replaced by second level champions Shinnik

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Yaroslavl, where former Russia, Spartak Moscow and Millwall striker Sergei Yuran is in his first major coaching position.

Torpedo Moscow, who play at Russia's largest stadium, the Luzhniki, were a long way behind Shinnik and resigned to making another attempt next season to regain their once-undisputed place in the top flight.

Victor Gusev

POLAND

Surprise turns sour

The coaches of last season's surprise champions Zaglebie Lubin and fellow underdogs GKS Belchatow, who finished runners-up, have both come under pressure after the clubs failed to live up to raised expectations.

Zaglebie coach Czeslaw Michniewicz, whose side were only seventh after 10 games, publicly criticised president Robert Pietryszyn and declared that he would not let him interfere in his job. Pietryszyn responded: "Michniewicz is a good coach but he loves the media too much. At this point I would like to show him only a yellow card. And he must lose six successive games to be sacked."

Orest Lenczyk, whose Belchatow were a place lower with a point fewer than Zaglebie, still has the strong support of president Ryszard Ozog, but said: "I know a few board members would like to have a new coach who will do what they tell him. I am here only thanks to the president."

Traditional title contenders Wisla Krakow were top with 26 points after 10 rounds, two points clear of Legia Warsaw and 12 ahead of Zaglebie.

Dariusz Kurowski

BULGARIA

On the slide

None of Bulgaria's three UEFA Cup representatives managed to reach the group stage, an especially poor showing given that three teams achieved the feat two seasons ago and Levski Sofia reached the quarter-finals last term.

CSKA Sofia conceded an injury-time equaliser in the home, second leg against Toulouse to exit on away goals. The club were facing a home ban from UEFA after Toulouse's goalscorer, Andre-Pierre Gignac, the referee and the visiting fans were pelted with plastic bottles and ripped-up seats. CSKA fans also destroyed seven buses after the game.

Litex Lovech lost 4-1 on aggregate to Hamburg, while Lokomotiv Sofia went down 4-3 to Rennes.

Levski Sofia forward Mariyan Ognyanov needed hospital treatment and was temporarily dropped from the squad after brawling outside a restaurant in his home town of Lom.

Botev Plovdiv president Dimitar Hristolov has threatened to end his financial support of the club after their fans threw stones at him and his Mercedes car following a disappointing 1-1 home draw with lowly Cherno More.

Rumen Paytashev

HUNGARY

Young Nemeth hits home

Highly-rated Liverpool striker Krisztian Nemeth underlined his potential by scoring twice for Hungary's Under-19s in a 3-1 win over Wales in Szekesfehervar that kept them top of their European Championship qualifying group. Nemeth is considered the brightest prospect of the latest graduates of the Sandor Karoly academy run by MTK.

Peterjon Cresswell

UKRAINE

Demyanenko bites the dust

DYNAMO KYIV coach Anatoliy Demyanenko stepped down the day after the team's 2-0 defeat at Roma in the first round of Champions League group games, citing his inability to produce better results in Europe.

"I made my decision following a real evaluation of my capacities," the 48-year-old said. "I felt under extreme pressure. It is very uncomfortable when a lot of people expect a result that you are unable to provide."

The Roma result meant Demyanenko had failed to gain a win in his seven Champions League games in charge. Last season – his first – Dynamo bowed out after taking only two points from the six-match group stage.

Not good enough...Demyanenko

In contrast Demyanenko had an impressive return at domestic level, with Dynamo winning League, Cup and Super Cup.

Dynamo boss Ihor Surkis, who termed it a "crisis situation", immediately turned to club vice-president Josef Szabo to fill the coaching gap. The 67-year-old, who has led the team on four previous occasions, agreed a one-year deal, but was less than happy about the new arrangement. Szabo publicly declared that he did not want to suffer the fate of his friend Valerii Lobanovskyi, the legendary Dynamo coach who died at the helm five years ago aged 63.

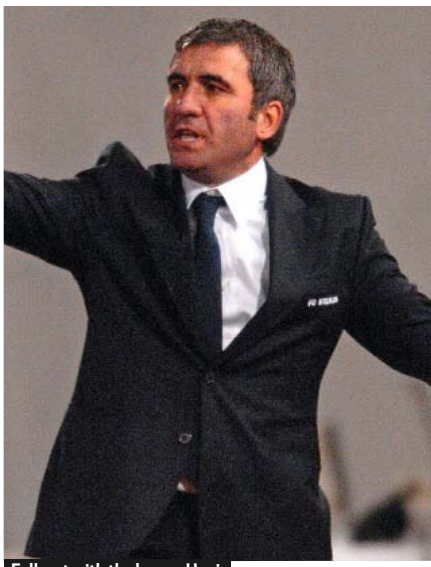
One of Szabo's first acts was to edge out veteran players such as Serhii Rebrov and Valentin Bialkevich and give the younger generation a chance. However, Dynamo then suffered a humiliating 1-0 home defeat by top-flight newcomers Naftovyk-Ukrnafta and lost their second Champions League game, 2-1 at home to Sporting Lisbon. In an effort to improve the situation the club have appointed Revaz Chokhonelidze, the former eastern Europe scout for Milan, as general director.

Dynamo's fortunes are in stark contrast to those of arch-rivals Shakhtar Donetsk, who won 11 league games in a row and their first two Champions League group ties.

Hryhorii Surkis, the brother of Dynamo's Ihor, was unanimously re-elected as federation president for a third term. The 58-year-old first took charge in 2000.

Zakarpattya have hired former Dynamo player Volodymyr Sharan as coach. He replaces Petro Kushlyk, who resigned because of the poor financing of the club.

Oleg Zadernovsky



Fall-out with the boss...Hagi

ROMANIA

Hagi quits, citing interference

GHEORGHE HAGI quit as coach of Steaua Bucharest after just a few weeks in charge following the team's 2-1 defeat away to Slavia Prague in the opening Champions League group encounter. The former national team icon cited interference from owner Gigi Becali, saying: "He always called me on the bench to tell me who must go on the field and who must be replaced."

Italian Massimo Pedrazzini was handed the reins.

Another Italian, Cristiano Bergodi, left Rapid Bucharest twice in four days, the first time minutes after his team failed to reach the UEFA Cup group stage after an away goals defeat by Nurnberg. The former Lazio and Italy defender then had a change of heart and returned to the bench, but quit again after a local sports daily published details of his contract with the club.

Politehnica Timisoara president Marian Iancu has been banned for 16 games for statements the federation considered to be "inciting violence". Iancu had backed Ionel Ganea after the striker hit a linesman during a league match, an act that earned the player a 22-match suspension. Iancu will not be able to represent the club in any official team activities during his ban.

Romanian clubs have an extra incentive to win the championship this season since the country's improved UEFA ranking means the top side will qualify automatically for next season's Champions League group stage.

Radu Timofte

ARGENTINA

Young and old star in River's derby win

Age limits...River veteran Ariel Ortega shields the ball from Boca's Ever Banega, who was later sent off

RIVER PLATE won the big derby against Boca Juniors having gone into the game only 10th in the opening championship, seven points behind their second-placed rivals. Their outstanding players in the 2-0 victory at the Monumental stadium were their oldest and youngest – Ariel Ortega, 33, who scored the second goal from a penalty, and 19-year-old new gem Diego Buonanotte, who played behind lone striker Radamel Falcao Garcia, the opening scorer, in a 4-3-2-1 line-up. Boca had to play the second half with 10 men after Ever Banega was sent off.

River Plate fans have a love-hate relationship with coach Daniel Passarrella, Argentina's 1978 World Cup-winning captain. But Passarella has never lost in his four games against Boca as River coach.

The derby kick-off was brought forward for only the second time, to avoid a clash with Argentina's Rugby World Cup quarter-final with Scotland. The first time was in 1981 when Carlos Reutemann was on the verge of winning the Formula One championship in Canada (he didn't).

There was trouble among the fans despite the presence of 1,300 police; 150 supporters were detained for fighting, but, as usual, were freed a couple of hours later.

Boca's defeat was their third in 10 days, having been knocked out of the Sudamericana Cup – South America's UEFA Cup equivalent – by Sao Paulo then losing to lowly Newell's Old Boys in the League. They badly missed leading striker Rodrigo Palacio, sidelined after gashing a leg on an advertising hoarding during a recent game.

Juan Sebastian Veron was left out of the national squad for the opening World Cup qualifiers despite an outstanding performance on his return from injury for Estudiantes de La Plata in their 3-0 defeat of Argentinos Juniors. National coach Alfio Basile unexpectedly picked Juan Roman Riquelme who had not played competitively since the Copa America in July because he is out of favour at Villarreal. Riquelme repaid Basile's faith by scoring two stunning goals from free-kicks in the 2-0 win over Chile.

Eric Weil

CHILE

Fine mess

The federation has come under intense criticism for its handling of the unsavoury incidents at the Under-20 World Cup in Canada, where the entire team were briefly detained by Toronto police in relation to the brawl that followed their stormy semi-final defeat by Argentina.

After some players complained that they had not received their prize money, the League announced it would pay up but would also deduct "fines, individual and collective, imposed by FIFA, and financial penalties imposed by the federation for acts of indiscipline".

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The League said it had also deducted an equal sum from each player to go towards the £23,000 compensation demanded by Canadian organisers for damage to the team bus.

This marked an about-turn because, at the time of the incident, the Chilean government had made an official protest to the Canadians, claiming the players were victims of heavy-handed treatment from the police, who allegedly used teargas and pepper spray against them.

Sergio Zarzar, head of the delegation in Canada, fuelled the row by saying that some players had gone on a drinking spree in their hotel room after qualifying for the knockout stages. The media asked why he had not done anything or spoken out at the time.

Critics have pointed out that Chilean directors were also involved in the

Sweet and sour...Leider Preciado's 100th goal for Independiente Santa Fe was followed by a six-game ban

COLOMBIA

Armed gang steal match takings

AMERICA, submerged in financial problems, suffered another blow when an armed gang made off with the takings from their home game against Once Caldas.

Shortly after leaving the Cali club's Pascual Guerrero stadium, the security van carrying the money was intercepted by four cars carrying about 15 men armed with machine guns. They made off with an estimated £24,000 from the 16,000 gate.

Independiente Santa Fe have named Arturo Leyva as coach. Leyva, who never played professionally, studied business administration at Notre Dame University in the United States, going on to study physical education in Brazil and completing a UEFA coaching course. His Santa Fe career began when he coached the under-eight division on a voluntary basis, and he has since worked his way through the club.

Leyva was immediately handed a hot potato when striker Leider Preciado was involved in successive acts of indiscipline. Having missed practice and been ordered to train alone, Preciado then scored his 100th goal for the club but turned the occasion sour by grabbing his genitals as he celebrated. Preciado later apologised, saying his gesture had been in response to barracking but it didn't save him from a six-match ban.

National team coach Jorge Luis Pinto also faced problems when Internazionale defender Ivan Cordoba said he would not play under him again.

"This decision has been taken only because of the multiple differences of thinking between the technical staff and the players, reaffirming the lack of confidence I have noticed since the start," said Cordoba, who was heavily criticised for his displays at the Copa America.

Pinto retorted: "Unfortunately, he didn't play well and, being fair to all the players, I was obliged to call up others. I thought he could come back at a later time."

Brian Homewood

trouble and arrested, but none has been disciplined.

Coach Jose Sulantay, who has since resigned, said: "They're using the plot to avoid paying money which they could have saved by not taking as many directors to the tournament."

Brian Homewood

BOLIVIA

Highs and lows

After all the fuss about how the national team should be allowed to stage World Cup qualifiers in La Paz at 3,600 metres (11,820 feet) above sea level, Bolivia as good as admitted that altitude can be a problem for them as well.

Coach Erwin Sanchez decided to split his squad into two groups before their opening 2010 tie, away to Uruguay – the home-based players stayed in La Paz and the seven overseas-based players trained in low-lying Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

Federation president Carlos Chavez said it would be counter-productive to send players based at low altitude up to La Paz and then down to sea level again to face the Uruguayans. This opened up the possibility of Bolivia effectively fielding separate teams in home and away matches throughout the qualifiers.

In addition to the foreigners, the 30-man squad for the first two games included five from clubs in Santa Cruz (which, incidentally, is a hotbed of opposition to the government of president Evo Morales). Earlier this year, FIFA banned matches at over 2,500m (8,208ft), a decision that caused an outcry in the Andean nation. The world body later back-tracked after a high-profile campaign led by Morales.

Brian Homewood

CANADA

Big two bow out

There was disappointment in Montreal and Vancouver as their respective sides, Impact and Whitecaps, both fell in the quarter-finals of the United Soccer Leagues First Division play-offs. Impact lost 5-3 on aggregate to Puerto Rico Islanders, while Whitecaps went down 3-1 to Portland Timbers. The latter result cost coach Bob Lilley his job.

Toronto FC were finishing their inaugural MLS campaign in a shambles, having won only one of their 15 matches between early July and late September.

Philippe Germain

MEXICO

Coach crunch

THE FIRST 11 matchdays of the opening championship produced the impressive tally of seven coaching changes, with America, the country's richest club, and Guadalajara, the most popular, among those to part company.

America dismissed Luis Fernando Tena after a 3-1 defeat by Toluca left them with only 13 points from 11 games. He was replaced by Argentinian Daniel Brailowsky, who played for the club during the 1980s and had been working as a television presenter.

Jose De la Torre's achievement in leading Guadalajara to their first domestic title since 1997 last year was quickly forgotten as they won only three of their first nine games. "It hurts us he's leaving, we like him a lot, but that's the way it is," said director Juan Jose Frangie. Efrain Flores was promoted from the youth team to take the reins.

Earlier the same week Ruben Omar Romano quit Atlas, Guadalajara's neighbours, and Miguel Herrera left Monterrey by "mutual consent". Dario Franco at Tecos UAG and Victor Manuel Vucetich at Jaguares had been the first out the door. Nery Pumpido, goalkeeper in Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning side, joined the list by leaving Veracruz after 11 games at the helm.

Brian Homewood

On the way out...Luis Fernando Tena

You can stick it!...Chonbuk Motors' Kim Jae-young gives the finger to referee Khalil Al-Ghamdi at the end of the second leg defeat by Urawa Reds

ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Motors grind to a halt

HOLDERS Chonbuk Motors lost their grip on the Asian Champions League trophy at the first hurdle after a 4-1 aggregate defeat to Urawa Reds of Japan. The South Koreans had been given a bye to the quarter-finals following their triumph last year, while the other seven teams had come through a six-game group stage.

Chonbuk lost 2-1 in the first leg in Saitama and went behind after just three minutes in the return to a goal from Tatsuya Tanaka, who had also scored in the opener. The Koreans' task was made all the harder by the dismissal of Chung Kyung-ho in the 22nd minute after picking up a second yellow card for diving, and an own goal from veteran defender Choi Jin-cheul midway through the second half was the final nail in the coffin.

"It was a difficult game for us but we feel frustrated by the referee," said coach Choi Kang-hee. "Chung Kyung-ho is not a diver. I am sure it was a foul by the defender, and I can't understand it."

Chonbuk's domestic rivals, Songnam Ilhwa, beat last year's runners-up, Al Karama of Syria, also 4-1.

Urawa were Japan's last survivors after Kawasaki Frontale were eliminated on penalties by Iranian side Sepahan following two dour 0-0 draws. UAE club Al Wahda completed the semi-final line-up with an away goals defeat of Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia. Al Wahda drew 0-0 at home in the first leg and 1-1 in the return.

Michael Church

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums

ROUND-UP

ASIA

● Defending SOUTH KOREAN champions Songnam Ilhwa took a major step towards retaining the title by topping the regular season standings. That gave them direct entry to the championship Final, where they face the winner of play-offs between the sides finishing second to sixth – Suwon Bluewings, Ulsan Hyundai, Gyeongnam, Pohang Steelers and Daejeon Citizen.

● Veteran THAI international Kiatisuk Senamuang has called time on his international career at the age of 34. The striker, who scored the winning goal against Malaysia in the inaugural Tiger Cup Final in 1996, played a major role in turning his national team into the dominant force in South-east Asia. Kiatisuk's last game was in a 1-1 friendly draw with the United Arab Emirates.

● KYRGYZSTAN'S Dordoi-Dynamo beat Nepal's Mahindra Police Club 2-1 to retain the AFC President's Cup. Azamat Ishenbaev and Roman Kornilov scored for the central Asians; Jumanu Rai pulled one back from the penalty spot in injury-time.

● East Bengal beat Mahindra United 2-1 to win INDIA'S Federation Cup for the fifth time. Brazilian Edmilson Marques scored both goals.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood

OCEANIA

● Unheralded Labasa surprisingly beat champions Ba 3-0 at the start of the second phase of FIJI'S national league. All the goals came in the first half, from Maciu Dunadamu, Pita Bolaitoga and teenage prodigy Roy Krishna.

● Former French international goalkeeper Lionel Charbonnier has been appointed coaching director of the TAHITIAN FA. His responsibilities include the development of the national Under-17 and Under-20 teams.

Paul Moon

International retirement...Kiatisuk

JAPAN

Reds go for double top

URAWA REDS remained on course to retain the J.League title as they maintained their six-point lead over closest challengers Gamba Osaka with six games to play. Gamba reached the League Cup Final, to be played in November, with an away goals victory over Kashima Antlers. They will meet Kawasaki Frontale, who beat Yokohama F Marinos 6-3 on aggregate.

Former Yugoslavia midfielder Dragan Stojkovic sparked rumours that he will become manager of Nagoya Grampus Eight after saying he was "looking closely at offers from Japan and elsewhere" during the press conference at which he announced his resignation as president of Red Star Belgrade. Speculation increased after the current boss, Dutchman Sef Vergoosen, announced he would leave at the end of the season. Stojkovic played for Grampus between 1994 and 2001.

Shimizu S-Pulse coach Kenta Hasegawa has been given a new two-year contract after turning the club's fortunes around. The ex-S-Pulse striker took charge in 2005 and the team barely staved off relegation that year. However, last term they finished fourth and this season were again riding high.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

Import...Victory's Brazilian striker Leandro Love

AUSTRALIA

Victory win at last

CHAMPIONS Melbourne Victory made a sluggish start to the new A-League season, drawing their first five games, but rose to second after wins over Queensland Roar and Sydney FC.

Since February's Grand Final triumph over Adelaide United, Victory have lost the influential Fred to DC United, but gained former Chelsea full-back Joseph Keenan, Brazilian striker Leandro Love, Costa Rican World Cup linkman Carlos Hernandez, midfielder Matthew Kemp from Adelaide United and, after five years in Switzerland, Socceroo defender Ljubo Milicevic. The latter immediately sustained a long-term injury, and Victory managed to get back to winning ways despite the fact that the other newcomers all experienced problems settling in.

Australia were beaten 1-0 by Argentina in a friendly at Melbourne Cricket Ground before a crowd of 70,171.

Paul Moon

NEW ZEALAND

Phoenix on the rise

NEW ZEALAND'S third attempt at establishing a fully professional club has begun encouragingly. Wellington Phoenix were a creditable fifth in Australia's eight-team A-League after seven rounds and average home attendances have been more than three times those achieved by failed forerunners Auckland Kingz and New Zealand Knights.

Coach Ricki Herbert has assembled a cosmopolitan squad, which includes former Watford and Australia midfielder Richard Johnson. Johnson's career appeared to be over in May after he was given an eight-month jail sentence for drink-driving. This was reduced to a suspended sentence on appeal.

Another Phoenix recruit is Brazilian defender Cleberson, who made headlines worldwide earlier this year when booked for kissing a referee.

The Phoenix fan favourite is another Brazilian, Daniel, an attacking midfielder who has quickly shown himself to be among the A-League's most gifted players. Daniel's CV includes stints at Twente Enschede, Videoton, Botafogo and Guarani.

Paul Moon

NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Mali make it but take a hit

FREDERIC KANOUTE and fellow striker Mamady Sidibe were set upon by disgruntled Togolese supporters after Mali snatched a surprise 2-0 win in Lome to take one of the last remaining berths at next year's Nations Cup finals. Kanoute was kicked and Sidibe hit on the arm as the Mali players rushed to reach the safety of the dressing room.

Togo, who surpassed themselves by reaching last year's World Cup finals, are likely to be banned from using the Kegue stadium for several games.

Kanoute opened the scoring in the 38th minute, with substitute Mamadou Diallo sealing the win in second-half stoppage time.

Togo had gone into the game level on points with Mali but even the presence of Emmanuel Adebayor, back in the side after he had missed two matches in June in his on-going battle to wrestle more money out of the federation, could not help them. The defeat meant they dropped to third in Group 10 as Benin, 2-0 victors over Sierra Leone, grabbed the last finals berth reserved for the three runners-up with the best records. Both goals were scored by Oumar Tchomogo, Benin's top marksman in the qualifiers for the 2004 edition, when the tiny west African country made their only previous finals appearance.

Defending champions Egypt, who had made heavy weather of their qualification campaign, finally made sure of top spot in Group 2 by beating Botswana 1-0 in Cairo.

Twelve teams had already booked their place: Angola, Cameroon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia and Zambia. Hosts Ghana qualified automatically.

Mark Gleeson

Targeted...goalscorer Kanoute was kicked by Togo fans

Red wedge...Etoile Sahel celebrate taking the lead in their 3-1 defeat of Al Hilal

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final looks familiar

THIS YEAR'S Champions League Final is a repeat of two years ago, with Egypt's Al Ahly facing Etoile Sahel of Tunisia after both saw off surprise survivors in the semis. Al Ahly, aiming for an unprecedented hat-trick of titles, beat Etoile 3-0 on aggregate in 2005, but this year's clash is expected to be a lot closer.

Etoile have been the form team in the early stages of the Tunisian season and have a crafty front line, led by the prodigious talent Amine Chermiti. The 19-year-old scored two flying headers in the 3-1 defeat of Sudan's Al Hilal in the semi-final second leg, turning round a 2-1 defeat in Omdurman. Al Ahly had a few nail-biting moments before overcoming Al Ittihad of Libya 1-0 on aggregate in their semi. The Egyptians drew 0-0 in Tripoli in the first leg, then won through an own goal from Ittihad defender Hamadi Shabaan after 20 minutes of the return in Cairo.

Etoile host the Final's first leg on October 27, with the return a fortnight later.

Mark Gleeson

ROUND-UP

● Belgian coach Henri Depireux, sacked by DR CONGO after failing to qualify for the Nations Cup, is seeking FIFA's assistance in obtaining unpaid salary. TP Mazembe Englebert clinched the domestic title but finished only second in their African Confederation Cup group to miss out on the Final.

● Cotonsport won a fourth successive title in CAMEROON, finishing five points ahead of Union Douala.

● German Franz Gerber has been appointed coach of MADAGASCAR, replacing Herve Arsene. Another German, Michael Nees, has quit as boss of RWANDA.

● Jean Michel Cavalli has been shown the door by ALGERIA after they missed out on the Nations Cup finals for the second successive time.

● Bibey Mutombo was the first coaching casualty of the season in SOUTH AFRICA, sacked by Orlando Pirates after a poor start. His replacement is Owen Da Gama, formerly of Platinum Stars. Benoni Premier United have been given permission to change name to Thanda Royal Zulu. Ajax Cape Town striker Thembikosi Fanteni will move to Maccabi Haifa in January on a three-year contract.

● Dutchman Ruud Krol has taken charge of EGYPTIAN club Zamalek.

● ZESCO are champions of ZAMBIA for the first time.

● SIERRA LEONE fired coach Jebbor Sherington after a dismal Nations Cup showing.

Mark Gleeson

Up against it... Tuvalu face a Tahiti free-kick at the South Pacific Games but they went on to gain a surprise draw

Ocean's 11

TUVALU WANT TO use their recent appearance at the South Pacific Games in Samoa as a springboard for FIFA membership. Although the team from the group of tiny Pacific islands managed to take only one point from their four games, which included a 16-0 thrashing by Fiji, FA president Tapugao Falefou is unbowed. "Football is the most popular sport in Tuvalu. More than 3,000 people play the game out of a population of only 11,000," he says. "We are planning to become a FIFA member as soon as possible, as well as joining the Oceania Football Confederation."

Tuvalu were invited to join the OFC at the confederation's annual meeting in Tahiti in November last year. The FA then confirmed that they would be making their third appearance in the football event of the multi-sport South Pacific Games, which the OFC used as the first stage of its World Cup qualifying programme.

Tuvalu could hardly have had a tougher start in Samoa, their first two games against the eventual finalists – Fiji, for whom Osea Vakatalesau scored a double hat-trick, and New Caledonia, Fiji's conquerors in the Final. Coach Toakai Puapua made a number of changes for the second game, including dropping keeper Jay Timo in favour of Mau Penisula, and Tuvalu gave a much more solid performance. Indeed, playing with a packed defence they managed to prevent New Caledonia scoring for the whole first half, conceding the only goal seven minutes after the break following a mistake by Penisula. "This was important to us to win back some pride," Puapua said.

There was further improvement in the third game against Tahiti as a late goal by Viliamu Sekifu earned the team a shock 1-1 draw. But a 4-1 defeat to fellow strugglers the Cook Islands meant Tuvalu finished bottom of the group.

Eight clubs play in a league and knockout cup on Tuvalu's main island of Funafuti – both titles are currently held by Tofaga – while there are a handful of teams on the other eight islands that make up the country. But money is a problem because Tuvalu are not affiliated to the OFC or FIFA.

Long absence

The national team made their South Pacific Games debut in 1979 in Fiji when they beat Tonga and Kiribati, but they did not appear again until 2003, again in Fiji. Once more, Tuvalu beat Kiribati and lost "only" 4-0 to the hosts. Falefou feels the team must play more games to stop a backward slide, saying: "We are eager to attend and to participate in all SPG and OFC tournaments." However, finding the money to do this will continue to be a challenge. Falefou admits: "The main reason [for the long gap in SPG appearances] was lack of funding. Our attendance in 1979 and in 2003 was merely because Fiji is very close to us. Our participation in Samoa this year was for the same reason."

Steve Menary

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RESULTS NOVEMBER 2007

INTERNATIONALS

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

AFRICA
1st stage, 1st legs

Oct 14 - Antananarivo
Madagascar 6 (Andriatsima 30, 40, pen 49, 57, Rakotomandimby 65, Tsaralaza 79)
Comoros Islands 2 (Midtadi 6, Bakar pen 53)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 7,754. **Ref:** Kaoma (Zam)

Oct 17 - Freetown
Sierra Leone 1 (Conteh 15)
Guinea-Bissau 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Mana (Nig)

2nd legs - November 17

Still to play: Djibouti v Somalia (Nov 16; single leg only)

ASIA
1st stage, 1st legs

Oct 8 - Dhaka
Bangladesh 1 (Mithu 50)
Tajikistan 1 (Hakimov pen 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 700. **Ref:** Al-Hilali (Oma)

Oct 8 - Saida
Lebanon 4 (Antar 33, Ghaddar 62, 76, El Ali 63)
India 1 (Chetri 30)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Al-Fadhli (Kuw)

Oct 8 - Muscat
Oman 2 (Bashir 5, Yousuf pen 23)
Nepal 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Al-Marzouqi (UAE)

Oct 8 - Doha, Qatar
Palestine 0
Singapore 4 (Shi Jia-yi 44, 53, Wilkinson 73, Alam Shah 86)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 75. **Ref:** Basma (Syr)

Oct 8 - Damascus
Syria 3 (Al-Zeno 73, pen 87, Al-Said pen 81)
Afghanistan 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Al-Ghamdi (Sau)

Oct 8 - Bangkok
Thailand 6 (Sarayoot 12, 49, Teerasil 21, Teeratep pen 55, Patiparn 82, Datsakorn 90)
Macao 1 (Chan Kin-seng 23)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 11,254. **Ref:** Chynybekov (Kyr)

Oct 8 - Hanoi
Vietnam 0
United Arab Emirates 1 (Saeed 79)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)

Oct 8 - Sana'a
Yemen 3 (Salem 43, Yahya 66, Saeed 80)
Maldives 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Mansour (Leb)

Oct 11 - Phnom Penh
Cambodia 0
Turkmenistan 1 (Karadanov 85)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Gosh (Ban)

Oct 13 - Tashkent
Uzbekistan 9 (Shatskikh 4, 16, 34, 57, 77, Kapadze 26, Karpenko 43, Bakaev 54, Salomov 68)
Taiwan 0
HT: 5-0. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Albadwawi (UAE)

Oct 18 - Bishkek
Kyrgyzstan 2 (Esenkul 45, Bokoev 76)
Jordan 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Sarkar (Ind)

Still to play: Bahrain v Malaysia; China v Myanmar; East Timor v Hong Kong; Mongolia v North Korea; Pakistan v Iraq; Sri Lanka v Qatar (October 21/22)

Bhutan v Kuwait -
Bhutan withdrew; Kuwait walkover
Guam v Indonesia -
Guam withdrew; Indonesia walkover

1st stage, 2nd legs

Oct 15 - Macao
Macao 1 (Chan Kin-seng 90)
Thailand 7 (Teerasil 22, Suree 39, Nirut 43, Datsakorn 48, Sarayoot 53, 57, 86)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 500. **Ref:** Racho (Syr)
Thailand 13-2 on agg

Rest of 2nd legs - October 26/28

OCEANIA
2nd stage

Oct 17 - Lautoka
Fiji 0
New Zealand 2 (Vicelich 32, Smeltz 86)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)

WORLD CUP QUALS – OCEANIA – 2ND STAGE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Zealand	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
New Caledonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vanuatu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fiji	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

SOUTH AMERICA

Oct 13 - Buenos Aires
Argentina 2 (Riquelme 26, 45)
Chile 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Zanetti, Demichelis, G Milito, Heinze, M Rodriguez (Gago 68), Mascherano, Cambiasso, Riquelme, Messi (Saviola 83), Tevez (Aguero 74).
Chile: Bravo - Alvarez, Ponce, Riffo, Fernandez, Fierro (Droguett 37), Iturra (Maldonado 63), Vidal, M Gonzalez, Rubio (Salas 46), Suazo.
Sent off: Alvarez 54min.

Oct 13 - Quito
Ecuador 0
Venezuela 1 (Rey 68)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 29,644. **Ref:** Ortube (Bol)
Ecuador: Viteri - Bagui (Quiroz 76), De la Cruz, G Espinoza, Hurtado, Castillo, Lara (W Ayovi 46), Mendez, Valencia (Borja 71), Benitez, C Tenorio.
Venezuela: Vega - A Cichero, Rey, Rojas, Rouga, Vallenilla, Arango (Guerra 65), M Mea Vitali (Vielma 80), Paez (H Gonzalez 77), L Vera, Maldonado.

Oct 13 - Lima
Peru 0
Paraguay 0
Att: 50,000. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)
Peru: Butron - Acasiete, Galliquio (Maestri 73), Solano, Vargas (Chiroque 83), Vilchez, De la Haza, Quinteros (Jayo 88), Rodriguez, Farfan, Pizarro.
Paraguay: Villar - J C Caceres, V J Caceres, Caniza, P Da Silva, Morel, E Barreto (Britez 87), Riveros, Vera, Cabanas (Achucarro 76), Haedo Valdez (O Cardozo 69).

Oct 13 - Montevideo
Uruguay 5 (Suarez 4, Forlan 38, Abreu 48, Sanchez 67, Bueno 82)
Bolivia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 25,200. **Ref:** Selman (Chl)
Uruguay: Carini - Godin, Fucile, Garcia, Scotti, C Rodriguez, Suarez (Sanchez 65), Forlan (Regueiro 65), Abreu (Bueno 72), Perez, Pereira.
Bolivia: Galarza - Soliz (Cabrera 46), Amador, R Garcia, Lima, J Moreno (Cardozo 58), J Vaca, Alvarez, Hoyos (Suarez 74), Raldes, M Moreno.
Sent off: R Garcia 42min.

Oct 14 - Bogota
Colombia 0
Brazil 0
Att: 41,000. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Colombia: Julio - Moreno, Mosquera, Velez, Amaya, Castrillon (Grisales 56), Ferreira (Ramirez 56), Sanchez, Zuniga, Falcao Garcia (E Perea 83), Renteria.
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Lucio, Gilberto, Juan, Maicon, Gilberto Silva, Mineiro, Kaka (Afonso Alves 85), Ronaldinho, Robinho (Julio Baptista 62), Vagner Love (Josue 70).

Oct 16 - Maracaibo
Venezuela 0
Argentina 2 (G Milito 16, Messi 43)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)
Venezuela: Vega - A Cichero, Rey, Rojas (Arismendi 68), Rouga, Seijas (Guerra 54), Vallenilla (Rosales 46), Arango, M Mea Vitali, Paez, Maldonado.
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Burdisso (Diaz 73), Demichelis, Ibarra (Gago 63), G Milito, Zanetti, Cambiasso, Mascherano, Riquelme, Messi, Tevez (Denis 81).

Oct 17 - La Paz
Bolivia 0
Colombia 0
Att: 19,469. **Ref:** Reinoso (Ecu)
Bolivia: Galarza - Amador, Raldes, Verduguez, Campos (J Vaca 46), L Gutierrez, Mojica, Reyes, Gatty Ribeiro, Andaveris (Cabrera 55), Arce (R Gutierrez 72). *Sent off: Reyes 69min.*
Colombia: Julio - Anchico (Banguero 85), Arizala, W Moreno, Mosquera, Vallejo, Amaya, Ferreira (A Ramirez 55), Sanchez, Renteria, Valencia (Castrillon 63).

Oct 17 - Rio de Janeiro
Brazil 5 (Vagner Love 19, Ronaldinho 73, Kaka 78, 85, Elano 83)
Ecuador 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 87,000. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Lucio, Gilberto, Juan, Maicon, Gilberto Silva, Mineiro, Kaka (Diego 89), Ronaldinho, Robinho, Vagner Love (Elano 76).
Ecuador: Viteri - Bagui, De la Cruz, G Espinoza, Hurtado, W Ayovi (J Guerron 76), Castillo, Mendez, Quiroz (C Tenorio 46), Urrutia, Benitez (Lara 87).

Oct 17 - Santiago
Chile 2 (Suazo 12, Fernandez 52)
Peru 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 58,000. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Chile: Bravo - Ponce, Riffo, Vidal, Droguett, Fernandez, Fierro (I Fuentes 89), M Gonzalez, Iturra, Salas (Jimenez 89), Suazo (Rubio 84).
Peru: Butron - Acasiete, Galliquio, Rodriguez, Vilchez (Bazalar 74), De la Haza (Quinteros 46), Jayo, Solano, Vargas, Farfan, Pizarro.

Oct 17 - Asuncion
Paraguay 1 (Haedo Valdez 15)
Uruguay 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 23,200. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Paraguay: Villar - J C Caceres, V J Caceres, Caniza, P Da Silva, Morel, E Barreto (Santana 88), Riveros, Vera, Cabanas (Achucarro 79), Haedo Valdez (O Cardozo 67).
Uruguay: Carini - Fucile, Godin, Lugano, Scotti, Garcia, Pereira, Perez (A Gonzalez 68), C Rodriguez (Bueno 79), Forlan, Suarez (Sanchez 63).

WORLD CUP QUALS – SOUTH AMERICA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Brazil	2	1	1	0	5	0	4
Paraguay	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Uruguay	2	1	0	1	5	1	3
Chile	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Venezuela	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Colombia	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Peru	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Bolivia	2	0	1	1	0	5	1
Ecuador	2	0	0	2	0	6	0

EURO 2008 QUALIFIERS

Group A

Oct 13 - Yerevan
Armenia 0
Serbia 0
Att: 10,000. **Ref:** Johannesson (Swe)
Armenia: Berezovsky - Hovsepyan, Arzumanyan, Dokhoyan, Tadevosyan, Pachajyan, Artur Voskanyan (R Hachatryan 70), Arakelyan, Artavazd Karamyan, Mkhitaryan (Aram Hakopyan 82), Melkonyan (Zebelyan 62).
Serbia: Stojkovic - Rukavina, Ivanovic, Stepanov, D Tosic, N Kovacevic, Kuzmanovic (Z Tosic 61), Stankovic, Krasic (Jankovic 73), Pantelic (Lazovic 62), Zigic.

Oct 13 - Baku
Azerbaijan 0
Portugal 2 (Bruno Alves 12, Hugo Almeida 45)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Bebek (Cro)
Azerbaijan: Veliyev - E Aliyev, S Abbasov, A Kerimov, Yunisoglu, E Guliyev, Chertoganov, Imamaliev (Gashimov 7), I Gurbanov (K Mamedov 56), Subasic, S Aliyev (A Gurbanov 73).
Sent off: A Kerimov 29min.
Portugal: Ricardo - Bruno Alves, Paulo Ferreira, Miguel (Jorge Ribeiro 75), Ricardo Carvalho, Maniche, Deco, Miguel Veloso, Cristiano Ronaldo, Quaresma (Nani 70), Hugo Almeida.

Oct 13 - Brussels
Belgium 0
Finland 0
Att: 4,131. **Ref:** Kapitanis (Cyp)
Belgium: Stijnen - Lombaerts, Van Buyten, Kompany, Gillet, Simons, Mudingayi, Haroun (Goor 67), Gregoire (Sonck 67), Mirallas (Sterchele 84), Dembele.
Finland: Jaaskelainen - Hyypia, Pasanen, Tihinen, Kallio, A Eremenko, R Eremenko, Riihilahti, Johansson (Kuqi 90), Kolkka, Sjolund (Nurmela 90).

Oct 13 - Warsaw
Poland 3 (Smolarek 56, 65, 66)
Kazakhstan 1 (Byakov 20)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Berntsen (Nor)
Poland: Boruc - Jop, Bronowicki, Dudka, Bak, Michal Zewlakow (Wasilewski 46), Saganowski (Zurawski 46), Lobodzinski (Kosowski 80), Lewandowski, Krzynowek, Smolarek.
Kazakhstan: Loria - Lyapkin, Kuchma, Smakov, Nurdauletov, Skorykh (Karpovitch 81), Baltiev, Zhumaskaliyev, Larin (Suyumagambetov 73), Ostapenko, Byakov (Ashirbekov 85).

Oct 17 - Baku
Azerbaijan 1 (S Aliyev 26)
Serbia 6 (D Tosic 4, Zigic 22, 42, Jankovic 41, Jovanovic 75, Lazovic 84)
HT: 1-4. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Einwaller (Aut)
Azerbaijan: Veliyev (Hasanzade 45) - S Abbasov, R Guliyev, Gashimov (Bakhshiev 50), Imamaliev (Ismaylov 67), E Guliyev, A Gurbanov, Chertoganov, R Abbasov, S Aliyev, Subasic.
Serbia: Stojkovic - Bisevac, Ivanovic, Rukavina, D Tosic, Z Tosic, Duljaj, Jankovic (Lazovic 68), N Kovacevic (Jovanovic 65), Kuzmanovic, Zigic (Pantelic 73).

Oct 17 - Brussels
Belgium 3 (Sonck 63, Dembele 69, Geraerts 76)
Armenia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 14,812. **Ref:** Valgeirsson (Ice)
Belgium: Stijnen - Lombaerts (Vertonghen 83), Van Buyten (Kompany 60), Simons, Swerts, Defour, Fellaini, Goor, Geraerts, Dembele, Mirallas (Sonck 46).
Armenia: Kasparov - Tadevosyan (Agvan Mkrtchyan 82), Hovsepyan, Arzumanyan, Dokhoyan, Arakelyan, R Hachatryan (Aram Hakopyan 57), Pachajyan, Artur Voskanyan, Melkonyan (Zebelyan 70), Artavazd Karamyan.

Oct 17 - Almaty
Kazakhstan 1 (Byakov 90)
Portugal 2 (Makukula 84, Cristiano Ronaldo 89)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,500. **Ref:** Wegereef (Hol)
Kazakhstan: Loria - Smakov, Zhalmagambetov, Irismetov, Kuchma, Larin (Lyapkin 37), Skorykh, Karpovitch (Nurdauletov 89), Zhumaskaliyev, Ostapenko, Byakov.
Portugal: Ricardo - Miguel, Ricardo Carvalho, Bruno Alves, Paulo Ferreira, Maniche (Nani 59), Deco, Miguel Veloso, Quaresma (Joao Moutinho 85), Hugo Almeida (Makukula 63), Cristiano Ronaldo.

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	12	7	3	2	20	10	24
Portugal	12	6	5	1	23	10	23
Serbia	12	5	5	2	19	9	20
Finland	12	5	5	2	11	6	20
Belgium	12	4	3	5	13	14	15
Armenia*	10	2	3	5	4	11	9
Kazakhstan	12	1	4	7	10	20	7
Azerbaijan*	10	1	2	7	5	25	5

Remaining games

17.11.07 Finland-Azerbaijan
17.11.07 Poland-Belgium
17.11.07 Portugal-Armenia
17.11.07 Serbia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Armenia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Azerbaijan-Belgium
21.11.07 Portugal-Finland
21.11.07 Serbia-Poland

**Both ties between Armenia and Azerbaijan were cancelled by UEFA because the two associations could not agree on venues. No points were awarded to either country*

Group B

Oct 13 - Torshavn
Faroe Islands 0
France 6 (Anelka 6, Henry 8, Benzema 50, 81, Rothen 66, Ben Arfa 90)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 8,076. **Ref:** Rossi (SaM)
Faroe Islands: Mikkelsen - C Jacobsen, J Jacobsen, Benjaminsen, E Hansen, S Samuelsen (av Flotum 86), S Olsen, Thomassen (Jespersen 78), Elttor (Midjord 46), R Jacobsen, Holst.
France: Landreau - Sagna, Abidal, Thuram, Evra, Rothen, Makelele (Diarra 73), Toulalan, Ribery (Ben Arfa 64), Anelka (Benzema 46), Henry.

Oct 13 - Genoa
Italy 2 (Pirlo 44, Grosso 84)
Georgia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 23,057. **Ref:** Megia Davila (Spa)
Italy: Buffon - Oddo, Panucci, Barzagli, Grosso, Pirlo, Gattuso, Ambrosini (Mauri 88), Quagliarella (Foggia 72), Di Natale, Toni.
Georgia: Lomaia - Shashiashvili (Siradze 60), Salukvadze, Asatiani, Khizanishvili, Kvirkvelia, Tskitishvili, Menteshashvili, Kankava, Mchedlidze (Kenia 60), Demetradze (Jakobia 85).

Oct 13 - Glasgow
Scotland 3 (K Miller 4, McCulloch 10, McFadden 68)
Ukraine 1 (Shevchenko 24)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 51,366. **Ref:** Vink (Hol)
Scotland: Gordon - Hutton, Weir, McManus, Naysmith, Brown (Maloney 76), Ferguson, Pearson, McCulloch (Dailly 60), McFadden (O'Connor 80), K Miller.
Ukraine: Shovkovskyi - Nesmachnyi, Yezerskyi, Chygrynskyi, Kucher, Husiev (Rotan 46), Tymoshchuk (Shelaiev 73), Gladkyy, Vorobei (Nazarenko 62), Shevchenko, Voronin.

Oct 17 - Nantes
France 2 (Henry 80, 81)
Lithuania 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 38,000. **Ref:** Vassai (Hun)
France: Landreau - L Diarra (Ben Arfa 69), Thuram, Gallas, Abidal, Toulalan, Makelele, Malouda, Ribery, Henry, Benzema.
Lithuania: Karcemarskas - Klimavicius, Dedura, Skerla, Zvirgzdauskas, Kucys (Velicka 84), Ksanavicius (Labukas 77), Kalonas (Savenas 63), Morinas, Danilevicius, Jankauskas.

Oct 17 - Tbilisi
Georgia 2 (Mchedlidze 16, Siradze 64)
Scotland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 55,500. **Ref:** Kircher (Ger)
Georgia: Makaridze - Shashiashvili, Asatiani, Salukvadze, Khizanishvili, Kankava, Menteshashvili, Kenia (Kandelaki 79), Kvirkvelia, Siradze (Jakobia 89), Mchedlidze (Kvakhadze 85).
Scotland: Gordon - Murty, McManus, Weir, G Alexander, Fletcher, Ferguson, Pearson (Boyd 66), Maloney, K Miller (Beattie 66), McFadden.

Oct 17 - Kiev
Ukraine 5 (Kalinichenko 40, 49, Husiev 43, 45, Vorebei 64)
Faroe Islands 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Jakov (Isr)
Ukraine: Pyatov - Nesmachnyi, Rusol, Chygrynskyi, Gai, Nazarenko, Tymoshchuk (Grytsay 69), Husiev (Vorobei 62), Kalinichenko, Gladkyy (Milevskyi 46), Voronin.
Faroe Islands: Mikkelsen - Atli Danielsen, E Hansen, O Hansen, J Jacobsen, Davidsen, Thomassen (T Hansen 8), Holst (av Flotum 75), C Jacobsen (Thorleifson 89), S Samuelsen, R Jacobsen.

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	11	8	1	2	23	3	25
Scotland	11	8	0	3	20	10	24
Italy	10	7	2	1	17	7	23
Ukraine	10	5	1	4	16	12	16
Lithuania	10	3	1	6	7	13	10
Georgia	11	3	1	7	16	17	10
Faroe Islands	11	0	0	11	3	40	0

Remaining games

17.11.07 Lithuania-Ukraine
17.11.07 Scotland-Italy
21.11.07 Georgia-Lithuania
21.11.07 Italy-Faroe Islands
21.11.07 Ukraine-France

Group C

Oct 13 - Athens
Greece 3 (Haristeas 10, Gekas 58, Limberopoulos 73)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 (Hrgovic 54, Ibisevic 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Gilewski (Pol)
Greece: Nikopolidis - Dellas, Kyrgiakos, Patsatzoglou, Torosidis, Basinas, Karagounis, Katsouranis, Amanatidis (Giannakopoulos 70), Gekas (Antzas 81), Haristeas (Limberopoulos 69).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Guso - Berberovic, Bajic, Nadarevic, Krunic (Ibisevic 46), Misimovic (Salihovic 82), Hrgovic, Vladavic, Rahimic, Blatnjak (Merzic 62), Muslimovic. *Sent off: Hrgovic 56min.*

Oct 13 - Budapest
Hungary 2 (Feczesin 34, Tozser 78)
Malta 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 7,633. **Ref:** Nalbandyan (Arm)
Hungary: Fulop - Szelesi, Vasko, Juhasz, Balogh, Vass, Tozser, Gera, Filkor (Buzsaky 75), Feczesin (Rajczi 83), Dzsudzsak (Leandro 88).
Malta: Haber - Azzopardi, Said, Scicluna, Dimech, Briffa, Sammut (Nwoko 66), Mallia, Michael Mifsud, Woods (Bajada 90), Schembri (Scerri 83).

Oct 13 - Chisinau
Moldova 1 (Frunza 11)
Turkey 1 (Umit Karan 63)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,500. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Moldova: Calancea - Golovatenco, Epureanu, Savinov, Corneencov, Bordian, Josan, Zmeu (Namasco 67), Gatcan (Olexici 89), Comleonoc, Frunza (Calincov 86).
Turkey: Hakan Arikan (Volkan Demirel 17) - Servet, Gokhan Zan, Ibrahim Uzulmez, Emre Belozoglu, Mehmet Topuz, Mehmet Aurelio, Arda (Tumer 69), Selcuk (Umit Karan 46), Tuncay, Gokhan Unal.

Oct 17 - Sarajevo
Bosnia-Herzegovina 0
Norway 2 (Hagen 5, B H Riise 74)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,500. **Ref:** Lannoy (Fra)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Guso - Berberovic, Merzic, Bajic, Krunic, Blatnjak (Ibisevic 46), Muslimovic (Dzeko 46), Misimovic, Maletic (Muharemovic 78), Nadarevic, Salihovic.
Norway: Opdal - Storbaek, Hangeland, Hagen, J A Riise, B H Riise (Bjorkoy 90), Andresen, Grindheim (Rushfeldt 58), Solli, Helstad (Braaten 76), Gamst Pedersen.

Oct 17 - Valletta
Malta 2 (Scerri 71, Michael Mifsud pen 84)
Moldova 3 (Bugaev pen 24, Frunza 31, 35)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Ishchenko (Ukr)
Malta: Haber - Scicluna (Scerri 46), Azzopardi (Nwoko 90), Said, Dimech, Briffa, Pace, Mallia, Woods, Schembri (Cohen 46), Michael Mifsud.
Moldova: Pascenco - Golovatenco, Stroenco, Lascencov, Corneencov, Bordian, Josan, Gatcan (Zmeu 77), Comleonoc (Namasco 69), Frunza (Doros 83), Bugaev. *Sent off: Golovatenco 88min.*

Oct 17 - Istanbul
Turkey 0
Greece 1 (Amanatidis 79)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 24,000. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Turkey: Volkan Demirel - Servet, Gokhan Zan, Hamit Altintop, Emre Belozoglu (Arda 71), Ibrahim Uzulmez, Mehmet Aurelio, Gokdeniz (Hakan Sukur 65), Umit Karan (Tumer 46), Gokhan Unal, Tuncay.
Greece: Chalkias - Dellas, Kyrgiakos, Antzas, Seitaridis, Torosidis, Karagounis, Basinas, Haristeas (Samaras 59), Amanatidis, Gekas (Limberopoulos 56).

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Greece	10	8	1	1	18	9	25
Norway	10	6	2	2	22	8	20
Turkey	10	5	3	2	22	10	18
Bosnia-Herz	11	4	1	6	16	21	13
Hungary	10	4	0	6	10	17	12
Moldova	11	2	3	6	9	19	9
Malta	10	1	2	7	9	22	5

Remaining games

17.11.07 Greece-Malta
17.11.07 Moldova-Hungary
17.11.07 Norway-Turkey
21.11.07 Hungary-Greece
21.11.07 Malta-Norway
21.11.07 Turkey-Bosnia-Herz

Group D

Oct 13 - Nicosia
Cyprus 3 (Okkas 59, 68, Charalambidis 79)
Wales 1 (J Collins 21)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 8,500. **Ref:** Bertolini (Swi)
Cyprus: Georgallides - Okkarides, Satsias (Marangos 71), Elia (Charalambidis 63), Michael (Yiasoumi 46), Christou, Garpozis, Makrides, M Nicolaou, Aloneftis, Okkas.
Wales: Coyne - Ricketts (Easter 73), J Collins (Morgan 44), Gabbidon, Bale, Nyatanga, Ledley, Robinson, S Davies, Bellamy, Eastwood (Earnshaw 58).

Oct 13 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 0
Germany 0
Att: 67,495. **Ref:** Hansson (Swe)
Rep Ireland: Given - Kelly, Dunne, O'Brien, Finnan, Carsley, A Reid, Kilbane (D Murphy 90), Keogh (McGeady 80), K Doyle (Long 70), Keane.
Germany: Lehmann - A Friedrich, Fritz, Jansen, Mertesacker, Metzelder, Frings, Schweinsteiger (Rolfes 18), Trochowski (Castro 90), Gomez (Podolski 64), Kuranyi.

Oct 13 - Dubnica nad Vahom
Slovakia 7 (Hamsik 24, Sestak 32, 57, Sapara 37, Skrtel 51, Holosko 54, Durica pen 76)
San Marino 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 2,576. **Ref:** Wilmes (Lux)
Slovakia: Contofalsky - Skrtel, Krajcik, Durica, Szabo, Sapara (Hesek 79), Cech, Hamsik, Kozak, Sestak (Vascak 60), Holosko (Sebo 71).
San Marino: F Valentini - Andreini, Vannucci, Vitaioli, Albani, Della Valle, G Bollini (Benedettini 57), C Valentini, Bugli (Bonifazi 68), Manuel Marani (De Luigi 85), F Nanni.

Oct 17 - Munich
Germany 0
Czech Republic 3 (Sionko 2, Matejovsky 23, Plasil 63)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 66,000. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Germany: Hildebrand - Jansen, A Friedrich, Mertesacker, Metzelder (Fritz 46), Schweinsteiger (Gomez 65), Frings, Trochowski (Rolfes 46), Odonkor, Kuranyi, Podolski.
Czech Republic: P Cech - Kovac, Rozehnal, Ujfalusi, Pospech, Galasek, Pudil (Kulic 73), Matejovsky, Sionko (Vlcek 58), Plasil, Koller (Fenin 79).

Oct 17 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 1 (Finnan 90)
Cyprus 1 (Okkarides 80)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 45,500. **Ref:** Vuorela (Fin)
Rep Ireland: Given - Finnan, Kilbane, McShane, O'Shea, J O'Brien (Miller 46), A Reid, Keogh (McGeady 63), K Doyle, Keane, Hunt (Douglas 74).
Cyprus: Georgallides - Satsias (Marangos 69), Okkarides, Christou, Charalambidis, Elia, Garpozis, Makrides (Theophilou 86), M Nicolaou, Okkas, Yiasoumi (Michael 73). *Sent off: Elia 90min.*

Oct 17 - Serravalle
San Marino 1 (Selva 73)
Wales 2 (Earnshaw 13, Ledley 36)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 1,182. **Ref:** Zammit (Mlt)
San Marino: A Simoncini - C Valentini, Vannucci (Bugli 76), Albani, Della Valle, Bonifazi (Bonini 62), D Simoncini, Muccioli, Andreini, De Luigi (Vitaioli 80), Selva. *Sent off: Albani 85min.*
Wales: Price - Bale, Eardley, Gabbidon, Nyatanga, Robinson, Vaughan (Ricketts 62), S Davies, Ledley, Earnshaw, Bellamy.

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Czech Rep	10	7	2	1	22	4	23
Germany	10	7	2	1	31	7	23
Rep Ireland	11	4	4	3	15	12	16
Cyprus	10	4	2	4	17	18	14
Slovakia	10	4	1	5	27	20	13
Wales	10	4	1	5	16	17	13
San Marino	11	0	0	11	2	52	0

Remaining games

17.11.07 Czech Republic-Slovakia
17.11.07 Germany-Cyprus
17.11.07 Wales-Rep Ireland
21.11.07 Cyprus-Czech Republic
21.11.07 Germany-Wales
21.11.07 San Marino-Slovakia

Group E

Oct 13 - Zagreb
Croatia 1 (Eduardo 52)
Israel 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,000. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Croatia: Pletikosa - Simic, Simunic, R Kovac, Corluka, Srna, Modric, J Leko, Olic (Rakitic 81), Kranjcar, Eduardo.
Israel: Davidovich - Meshumar, Gershon, Ben Haim, Antebi, Baruchyan, Alberman, Benayoun, Balili, Barda (Ohayon 75), Cohen.

Oct 13 - Wembley
England 3 (Wright-Phillips 11, Rooney 32, Rahn og 33)
Estonia 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 86,655. **Ref:** Vollquartz (Den)
England: Robinson - Richards, Campbell, Ferdinand (Lescott 46), A Cole (P Neville 49), Wright-Phillips, Gerrard, Barry, J Cole, Rooney, Owen (Lampard 70).
Estonia: Poom - Kruglov, Stepanov, Piiroja, Jaager, Rahn, Klavan, Dmitrijev, Lindpere, Kink (Viikmae 62), Saag.

Oct 17 - Skopje
Macedonia 3 (Naumoski 30, Sedloski 44, Pandev 59)
Andorra 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Malzinskas (Lit)
Macedonia: Pacovski - Lazarevski, Noveski, Sedloski, I Mitreski, Popov, Sumulikoski, Tasevski (Trajanov 84), Maznov (Ristic 62), Naumoski (Polozani 75), Pandev.
Andorra: Koldo - Sonejee, Fernandez, I Lima, Ayala, Escura, Pujol, Ruiz (Xavi Andorra 63), Jimenez (Somoza 78), Vieira, Toscano (Riera 82).

Oct 17 - Moscow
Russia 2 (Pavlyuchenko pen 69, 73)
England 1 (Rooney 29)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 84,700. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo (Spa)
Russia: Gabulov - A Berezutsky, Ignashevich, V Berezutsky (Torbinsky 46), Anyukov, Zyrianov, Semshov, Bilyaletdinov, Zhirkov, Arshavin (Kolodin 90), Kerzhakov (Pavlyuchenko 58).
England: Robinson - Richards, Ferdinand, Campbell, Lescott (Lampard 79), Wright-Phillips (Downing 80), Gerrard, Barry, J Cole (Crouch 80), Rooney, Owen.

GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	10	8	2	0	25	4	26
England	11	7	2	2	22	4	23
Russia	10	6	3	1	16	5	21
Israel	10	5	2	3	17	11	17
Macedonia	10	3	2	5	10	11	11
Estonia	11	1	1	9	3	21	4
Andorra	10	0	0	10	2	39	0

Remaining games

17.11.07 Andorra-Estonia
17.11.07 Israel-Russia
17.11.07 Macedonia-Croatia
21.11.07 Andorra-Russia
21.11.07 England-Croatia
21.11.07 Israel-Macedonia

Group F

Oct 13 - Aarhus
Denmark 1 (Tomasson 87)
Spain 3 (Tamudo 14, Sergio Ramos 40, Riera 89)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 19,849. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Denmark: T Sorensen - Helveg, M Laursen, U Laursen, N Jensen (Perez 79), Poulsen, D Jensen, Andreasen (Bendtner 46), Rommedahl, Tomasson, Gronkjaer (Kahlenberg 65).
Spain: Casillas - Marchena, Sergio Ramos, Capdevila, Albiol, Albelda (Ibanez 64), Xavi, Iniesta, Joaquin (Riera 69), Fabregas (Luis Garcia 78), Tamudo.

Oct 13 - Reykjavik
Iceland 2 (E Gudjohnsen 4, 52)
Latvia 4 (Klava 27, Laizans 31, Verpakovskis 37, 46)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 5,865. **Ref:** Dean (Eng)
Iceland: Arason - K Sigurdsson (Bjornsson 88), H Jonsson, R Sigurdsson, Ingimarsson, Steinsson (Arnason 25), B Gunnarsson, J Gudjonsson, Hallfredsson, Thorvaldsson (Helgi Sigurdsson 65), E Gudjohnsen.
Latvia: Vanins - Klava, Gorkss, Ivanovs, Zirnis, Astafjevs, Laizans, Solonicins, Visnakovs (Zigajevs 90), Karlsons (Rimkus 59), Verpakovskis (Pahars 78).

Oct 13 - Vaduz
Liechtenstein 0
Sweden 3 (Ljungberg 19, Wilhelmsson 29, A Svensson 56)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 4,131. **Ref:** Dondarini (Ita)
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Telser, Oehri, D Hasler, F Burgmeier (Steuble 59), R Buchel, M Buchel (Gerster 61), T Beck, M Frick, Rohrer, D Frick (Fischer 60).
Sweden: Isaksson - Concha, P Hansson, Majstorovic, Edman, Wilhelmsson, Linderoth (D Andersson 70), A Svensson, Ljungberg (Kallstrom 39), Allback, Elmander (Rosenberg 60).

Oct 17 - Copenhagen
Denmark 3 (Tomasson pen 7, U Laursen 27, Rommedahl 90)
Latvia 1 (Gorkss 80)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 19,004. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Denmark: T Sorensen - M Laursen, U Laursen (Andreasen 32), C Sorensen, Helveg, Poulsen (Gronkjaer 71), D Jensen, Kahlenberg, Rommedahl, Bendtner, Tomasson.
Latvia: Vanins - Klava, Ivanovs, Zirnis, Gorkss, Astafjevs, Laizans, Visnakovs (Zigajevs 78), Solonicins, Rimkus (Butriks 63), Pahars (Kacanovs 90).

Oct 17 - Vaduz
Liechtenstein 3 (M Frick 27, T Beck 80, 83)
Iceland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 2,589. **Ref:** Zografos (Gre)
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Telser, D Hasler, Martin Stocklasa, Oehri, R Buchel, Gerster, F Burgmeier, Fischer (T Beck 61), Rohrer (R Beck 69), M Frick (D'Elia 90).
Iceland: Arason - H Jonsson (Skulason 71), K Sigurdsson, Ingimarsson, R Sigurdsson, J Gudjonsson (Bjornsson 57), Hallfredsson, Vidarsson, B Gunnarsson (Asgeirsson 85), Thorvaldsson, E Gudjohnsen.

Oct 17 - Stockholm
Sweden 1 (Mellberg 15)
Northern Ireland 1 (Lafferty 72)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 33,112. **Ref:** Layec (Fra)
Sweden: Isaksson - Concha, Mellberg, P Hansson, Edman, Linderoth, A Svensson, Wilhelmsson (M Nilsson 45), Kallstrom (Johansson 85), Ibrahimovic, Elmander (Allback 73).
Northern Ireland: Taylor - McAuley, A Hughes, McCartney (Capaldi 87), Craigan, Davis, Clingan, Brunt, Healy, Sproule, Lafferty.

GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	10	7	2	1	21	5	23
Spain	10	7	1	2	19	8	22
Denmark	10	5	2	3	17	9	17
N Ireland	10	5	2	3	15	12	17
Latvia	10	3	0	7	10	14	9
Iceland	11	2	2	7	10	24	8
Liechtenstein	11	2	1	8	8	28	7

Remaining games
17.11.07 Latvia-Liechtenstein
17.11.07 Northern Ireland-Denmark
17.11.07 Spain-Sweden
21.11.07 Denmark-Iceland
21.11.07 Spain-Northern Ireland
21.11.07 Sweden-Latvia

Group G

Oct 13 - Gomel
Belarus 0
Luxembourg 1 (F Leweck 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 14,000. **Ref:** Svendsen (Den)
Belarus: Zhevnov (Khomutovski 69) - Omelyanchuk, Stasevich (Kalachev 62), Filipenko, Plaskonny, Korytko, Skverniuk, Romaschenko, A Hleb, Kornilenko, Voronkov (Rodionov 80).
Luxembourg: Joubert - Lang, Kintziger, Wagner, Peters, Payal (Ferreira 79), Bettmer, Lombardelli (F Leweck 45), Remy, Mutsch, Kitenge (Da Mota 61).

Oct 13 - Constanta
Romania 1 (Goian 71)
Holland 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Romania: Lobont - Goian, Ogararu, Rat, Tamas, Chivu, Nicolita, Codrea, O Petre, Marica (D Niculae 70), Mutu.
Holland: Stekelenburg - Van Bronckhorst, Heitinga (Jaliens 68), Ooijer (Koevermans 84), Mathijsen, Bouma, De Zeeuw, Van der Vaart, Seedorf, Van Nistelrooy, Robben (Babel 78).

Oct 13 - Celje
Slovenia 0
Albania 0
Att: 4,625. **Ref:** Pereira Gomes (Por)
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Brecko, Jokic (Ilic 77), Morec, Cipot, Zlogar, Kirm, Koren, Birsa (Mihelic 82), Novakovic (Rusic 61), Lavric.
Albania: Beqaj - Vangjeli, Curri, Dede, Rrustemi, Haxhi (Mukaj 60), Lala, Bulku, Duro (Bushi 77), Skela (Hyka 90), Bogdani.

Oct 17 - Tirana
Albania 1 (Kishishev og 32)
Bulgaria 1 (Berbatov 87)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Stuchlik (Aut)
Albania: Beqaj - Curri, Dallku, Dede, Vangjeli, Duro, Haxhi (Mukaj 46), Lala, Skela, Salihi (Bulku 73), Bogdani.
Bulgaria: G Petkov - Kishishev, Tomasic, V Iliev, Lucio Wagner, Angelov, S Petrov (Georgiev 46), Telkiyski (Yankov 46), Popov (Yovov 72), M Petrov, Berbatov.

Oct 17 - Eindhoven
Holland 2 (Sneijder 14, Huntelaar 88)
Slovenia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
Holland: Stekelenburg - Jaliens, Heitinga, Bouma, Emanuelson, Sneijder, De Zeeuw, Seedorf, Van Persie (Ooijer 60), Huntelaar, Van der Vaart (Robben 29; Babel 63).
Slovenia: S Handanovic, Cesar, Koren, Morec, Komac, Zlogar, Kirm (Jokic 82), Lavric, Birsa (Novakovic 68), Ilic, Brecko (Ljubljankic 85).

Oct 17 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Romania 2 (F Petre 42, Marica 61)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,584. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Luxembourg: Gillet - Lang, Wagner, Kintziger, Hoffmann, Mutsch, Payal (F Leweck 68), Peters, Bettmer (Ferreira 49), Remy, Kitenge (Da Mota 57).
Romania: Lobont - Ogararu, Tamas, Goian, Rat, F Petre, Margaritescu, Chivu (O Petre 87), Marica, Dica (Cristea 68), D Niculae (Bratu 76).

GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	10	8	2	0	20	5	26
Holland	10	7	2	1	13	3	23
Bulgaria	10	5	4	1	15	7	19
Albania	10	2	5	3	9	8	11
Slovenia	11	3	2	6	9	14	11
Belarus	10	2	1	7	11	20	7
Luxembourg	11	1	0	10	2	22	3

Remaining games
17.11.07 Albania-Belarus
17.11.07 Bulgaria-Romania
17.11.07 Holland-Luxembourg
21.11.07 Belarus-Holland
21.11.07 Romania-Albania
21.11.07 Slovenia-Bulgaria

Top two in each group qualify for finals. Austria and Switzerland qualify automatically as co-hosts

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Group 1

GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	4	3	1	0	13	0	10
Gabon	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Madagascar	4	0	0	4	0	14	0

Djibouti withdrew

Group 2

Oct 13 - Cairo
Egypt 1 (Fadl 76)
Botswana 0
HT: 0-0

Oct 13 - Nouakchott
Mauritania 2 (Da Silva 25, Teguedi 47)
Burundi 1 (Abdalla 86)
HT: 1-0

GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	6	3	3	0	9	2	12
Mauritania	6	2	1	3	9	10	7
Burundi	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
Botswana	6	2	1	3	3	7	7

Group 3

GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	6	5	0	1	10	3	15
Uganda	6	3	2	1	8	3	11
Niger	6	1	1	4	5	11	4
Lesotho	6	1	1	4	3	9	4

Group 4

GROUP 4 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sudan	6	5	0	1	13	4	15
Tunisia	6	4	1	1	12	3	13
Seychelles	6	1	1	4	3	14	4
Mauritius	6	0	2	4	3	10	2

Group 5

GROUP 5 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	6	5	0	1	13	4	15
Eq Guinea	6	3	1	2	6	7	10
Rwanda	6	2	0	4	10	11	6
Liberia	6	1	1	4	6	13	4

Group 6

GROUP 6 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	6	4	1	1	16	5	13
Eritrea	6	2	3	1	5	8	9
Kenya	6	2	1	3	6	7	7
Swaziland	6	0	3	3	0	7	3

Group 7

GROUP 7 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal	6	3	2	1	12	3	11
Mozambique	6	2	3	1	5	4	9
Tanzania	6	2	2	2	4	7	8
Burkina Faso	6	1	1	4	5	12	4

Group 8

GROUP 8 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea	6	3	2	1	10	3	11
Algeria	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Gambia	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Cape Verde Is	6	1	2	3	3	10	5

Group 9

Oct 12 - Freetown
Sierra Leone 0
Benin 2 (Tchomogo 10, 65)
HT: 0-1

Oct 12 - Lome
Togo 0
Mali 2 (Kanoute 37, Diallo 90)
HT: 0-1

GROUP 9 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali	6	3	3	0	10	1	12
Benin	6	3	2	1	10	4	11
Togo	6	3	0	3	7	9	9
Sierra Leone	6	0	1	5	1	14	1

Group 10

GROUP 10 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Namibia	6	3	1	2	9	8	10
DR Congo	6	2	3	1	8	6	9
Libya	6	2	2	2	7	6	8
Ethiopia	6	2	0	4	5	9	6

Group 11

GROUP 11 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zambia	6	3	2	1	9	3	11
South Africa	6	3	2	1	10	4	11
Congo	6	1	4	1	5	6	7
Chad	6	0	2	4	3	14	2

Group 12

GROUP 12 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Zimbabwe	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Malawi	4	1	0	3	2	6	3

Group winners and the three runners-up with the best record (Tunisia, Benin & South Africa) qualified for finals. Ghana qualified automatically as hosts

COSAFA CASTLE CUP

Semi-finals

Sep 29 - Atteridgeville, South Africa
Mozambique 0
Zambia 3 (Chivuta 35, Mayuka 69, Njovu 79)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)

Sep 29 - Atteridgeville, South Africa
South Africa 1 (Modise 32)
Botswana 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Marange (Zim)

FRIENDLIES

Monday, September 17

Sep 17 - Doha
Qatar 1 (Al-Shammari 88)
Oman 1 (Suleiman 31)
HT: 0-1

Sunday, September 23

Sep 23 - Dubai
United Arab Emirates 1 (Abdulrahman 90)
Lebanon 1 (Al-Ali 17)
HT: 0-1

Tuesday, October 2

Oct 2 - Muscat
Oman 1 (Mubarak 27)
Maldives 0
HT: 1-0

Wednesday, October 3

Oct 3 - Bangkok
Thailand 1 (Kiatprawut 73)
United Arab Emirates 1 (Mubarak 89)
HT: 0-0

Thursday, October 4

Oct 4 - Manama
Bahrain 3 (Akwani 36, 60, 77)
Singapore 1 (Casmir 90)
HT: 1-0

Saturday, October 13

Oct 13 - San Salvador
El Salvador 2 (Quintanilla 60, Martin 87)
Costa Rica 2 (Nunez 25, C Castro 36)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Rivera (EIS)
El Salvador: Gomez (H Hernandez 46) - Barrios, L Hernandez (Calderon 83), Salazar, Martin, Pacheco, Turcios (Alas 64), Romero, Quintanilla, Cerritos (Blancos 56), Reyes (Anaya 90).
Sent off: Alas 85min.
Costa Rica: Lewis - Fernandez, Umana, Chinchilla, Herrera, C Castro (Diaz 86), Sequeira (Lopez 65), Rodriguez (Centeno 77), Ruiz (Bolanos 65), A Solis (Aleman 70), Nunez (Diach 77).

Oct 13 - Zurich
Switzerland 3 (Streller 2, 55, Yakin 36)
Austria 1 (Aufhauser 11)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 22,500. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Switzerland: Coltorti - Lichtsteiner, Djourou, Senderos (Grichting 46), Magnin (Spycher 86), Fernandes (Celestini 82), Inler, Vonlanthen (D Degen 18), Yakin (Margairaz 46), Barnetta, Streller (N'Kufo 77).
Austria: Manninger - Standfest (Ertl 65), Prodl (Schiemer 40), Hiden, Fuchs, Sariyar, Garics, Aufhauser, Ivanschitz (Harnik 83), Weissenberger (Morz 65), Kuljic (Kienast 65).

Sunday, October 14
Oct 14 - Tegucigalpa
Honduras 1 (W Martinez 55)
Panama 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 23,139. **Ref:** Zelaya (Hnd)
Honduras: Valladares - Mendoza (Garcia 66), Bernardez, Figueroa, E Izaguirre, Alvarez (W Martinez 46), Guevara (Nunez 46), Rodriguez (Costly 75), W Palacios, De Leon, D Suazo (Thomas 85).
Panama: Penedo - R Torres, Moreno, Baloy, Rivera, J Perez, Herrera (Munoz 65), Solis (Barahona 78), Escobar, Aguilar (Medina 67), Blanco (McLine 55).

Oct 14 - Juarez
Mexico 2 (Cacho 54, pen 68)
Nigeria 2 (Martins 31, 52)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rodas (Gtm)
Mexico: Ochoa - Magallon, Salcido, Pinto, I Castro, Torrado, Arce (Villaluz 84), Pineda, Cacho (Valadez 86), Giovani, Guardado.
Nigeria: Aiyenugba - Apam, Afolabi, Taiwo (Okonkwo 86), Shittu, Ishiaku (Kaita 63), Mikel (Nwaneri 89), Olofinjana (Uche 76), Etuhu, Utaka, Martins.

Oct 14 - Rouen, France
Senegal 3 (Gueye 20, Niang pen 43, Kamara pen 82)
Guinea 1 (Mansare 45)
HT: 2-1

Tuesday, October 16
Oct 16 - Muharraq
Bahrain 2 (Isa 40, 70)
Libya 0
HT: 1-0

Oct 16 - Rijeka
Croatia 3 (Olic 45, 69, Vukojevic 48)
Slovakia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Laperriere (Swi)
Croatia: Runje (Galinovic 46) - Corluka, Drpic, Simic (Simunic 57), Knezevic, Rakitic, J Leko (Vukojevic 46), Vranjes, Babic (Srna 70), Eduardo, Olic (Modric 70).
Slovakia: Hajduch (Kuciak 46) - Skrtel, Singlar (Szabo 84), Brezinsky (Durica 75), Petras, Strba, Hamsik, Vascak (Jez 67), Cech (Graciak 46), Hesek, Holosko (Sebo 62).

Oct 16 - Doha
Qatar 3 (Bechir 34, Quintana 70, Al-Shammari 83)
Iraq 2 (Ahmed Salah 20, Emad Mohammed 79)
HT: 1-1

Wednesday, October 17
Oct 17 - Innsbruck
Austria 3 (Kuljic pen 30, Ivanschitz pen 64), Standfest 74)
Ivory Coast 2 (Drogba 53, pen 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Austria: Payer - Garics, Hiden, Schiemer, Gercaliu, Aufhauser (Ertl 81), Sariyar, Standfest, Ivanschitz (Morz 86), Weissenberger (Fuchs 81), Kuljic (Kienast 46).
Ivory Coast: Loboue - K Toure (Meite 46), Gohouri, Tiene (Fae 46), Eboue (Diane 75), Zokora, Yapi Yapo, Demel, Dindane, Drogba, A Kone (Ya Konan 71).

Oct 17 - San Jose
Costa Rica 1 (Centeno 48)
Haiti 1 (Alcenat 66)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Costa Rica: Porras - V Cordero, Badilla, Wong, Harris, Diaz, Centeno, Lopez, Bolanos (A Solis 64), Aleman (Nunez 55), Diach (C Castro 79).
Haiti: Fenelon - Bruny, Gilles, Aveska, Bertin, Boucicaut (Azor 85), Vubert, Chery, Fucien (Alcenat 58), Thermeus (Saint Preux 73), Lormera (Norde 34).

Oct 17 - San Salvador
El Salvador 0
Trinidad & Tobago 0
Att: 13,000. **Ref:** Bonilla (ELS)
El Salvador: H Hernandez - L Hernandez, Salazar, Barrios, Martin, Turcios (Alas), Romero, Quintanilla, Pacheco, Cerritos (Calderon), Reyes.
Trinidad & Tobago: Phillip - K Williams, Power, Pacheco (Wolffe 73), Cupid, K Thomas, David, Noel (Leon 77), Smith (Jorsling 70), Marcano (K Baptiste 65), Toussaint.

Oct 17 - Tallinn
Estonia 0
Montenegro 1 (Vucinic 41)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Estonia: Aksalu (Pareiko 46) - Jaager, Barengrub, Stepanov, U Rooba, Reim (Rahn 78), Dmitrijev (Terehhov 88), Klavan, Lindpere, Saag (Kink 81), Neemelo (Viikmae 66).
Montenegro: Poleksic (D Bozovic 46) - Pavicevic (Lakic 46), Pejovic, Batak, Tanasijevic, Drincic, Pekovic (Jeknic 85), Bogavac (Novakovic 72), Vukcevic (Djalovic 30; Nikezic 82), V Bozovic, Vucinic.

Oct 17 - Helsinki
Finland 0
Spain 0
Att: 8,000. **Ref:** Bre (Fra)
Finland: Niemi - Pasanen, Hyypia (Tihinen 47), Vayrynen (Ilola 83), Kallio, Kuivasto, R Eremenko, Riihilahti (Nurmela 49), Kolkka (Lampi 75), Johansson, Kuqi (A Eremenko 64).
Spain: Reina - Sergio Ramos, Pablo, Puyol (Marchena 46), Pernia, Albelda, Iniesta (Xavi 46), Angulo (Joaquin 54), Silva (Tamudo 54), Riera, Luis Garcia (Fabregas 72).

Oct 17 - Tel Aviv
Israel 2 (Bruchian 37, Alberman 72)
Belarus 1 (Romaschenko 68)
HT: 1-0

Oct 17 - Siena
Italy 2 (Lucarelli 82, 90)
South Africa 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,219. **Ref:** Weiner (Ger)
Italy: Amelia - Zaccardo (Mesto 82), Gamberini (Dossena 63), Bonera, Chiellini, De Rossi (Palombo 60), Montolivo (Nocerino 75), Foggia (Gilardino 60), Rosina (Semioli 87), Mauri, Lucarelli.
South Africa: Fernandez - Nzama (Mere 90), Mokoena, Morris, Evans, Sibaya, Nkosi (Nomvete 73), Pienaar (Sono 75), Modise, Buckley (Tshabalala 73), McCarthy (Fanteni 85).

Oct 17 - Osaka
Japan 4 (Okubo 21, 42, Maeda 53, Kaji 68)
Egypt 1 (Fadl 58)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 41,901. **Ref:** Gilewski (Pol)
Japan: Kawaguchi - Kaji, Nakazawa, Abe, Komano, K Nakamura, K Suzuki (Konno 73), Endo (Fujimoto 73), Yamagishi (Hashimoto 73), Maeda, Okubo.
Egypt: El Monsef - Fatah Alla, H Said, El Mehamady, Moawad, Abd Rabbou, Soliman, Abdelrahman (Mashhour 52), A Hassan (Gamel 46), Fadl, Zaki (Ahed 79).

Oct 17 - Los Angeles, USA
Mexico 2 (Vela 31, Villaluz 32)
Guatemala 3 (Gomez 6, Avila 65, 74)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 42,350. **Ref:** Salazar (USA)
Mexico: Ochoa - Magallon (Dominguez 46), Salcido, Esparza (O Arellano 80), Moreno (Castillo 76), Araujo (Hernandez 87), Villaluz, Pineda, Vela (Valadez 46), Giovani (Barrera 46), Guardado.
Sent off: Villaluz 51min, Pineda 59min.
Guatemala: Motta - Noriega, Melgar, Flores, G Cabrera, Alvizuris, Avila, N Martinez, Gomez, Quinonez (Rodriguez 37), Ruiz.
Sent off: Ruiz 51min, Noriega 83min.

Oct 17 - Tangiers
Morocco 2 (Alloudi 71, El Karkouri 90)
Namibia 0
HT: 0-0

Oct 17 - Lodz
Poland 0
Hungary 1 (Hajnal pen 80)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Circhetta (Swi)
Poland: Fabianski - Wasilewski (Bartczak 83), Jop, Dudka, Kielbowicz (Wawrzyniak 82), Golos (Zienczuk 46), Sobolewski, Lewandowski (Kazmierczak 46), Gargula (Zahorski 46), Kosowski, Matusiak (Brozek 46).
Hungary: Fulop - Csizmadia, Vasko, Juhasz, Vanczak, Gera (Buzsaky 78), Vass, Tozser (Leandro 76), Hajnal (Filkok 90), Dzsudzsak (Halmosi 46), Feczesin (Priskin 46).

Oct 17 - Basle
Switzerland 0
United States 1 (Bradley 86)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 16,500. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Switzerland: Zuberbuhler - Djourou (Von Bergen 17), Magnin, Margairaz (Yakin 46), Streller (N'Kufo 46), Grichting, D Degen, Barnetta (Spycher 75), Inler, Lichtsteiner, Celestini (Fernandes 46).
United States: Hahnemann (Guzan 46) - Cherundolo, Onyewu (Califf 46), Bocanegra, Lewis (Szetela 84), Feilhaber, Edu, Bradley, Beasley (Pearce 31), Twellman (Adu 77), Dempsey (Findley 90).

Oct 17 - Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates 0
Tunisia 1 (Belaid 29)
HT: 0-1

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Third-place play-off
Sep 30 - Shanghai
Norway 1 (R Gulbrandsen 63)
United States 4 (Wambach 30, 46, Chalupny 58, O'Reilly 59)
HT: 0-1

Final
Sep 30 - Shanghai
Germany 2 (Prinz 52, Laudehr 86)
Brazil 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ogston (Aus)
Germany: Angerer - Stegemann, Krahn, Bresonik, Behringer (Muller 74), Smisek (Bajramaj 80), Prinz, Lingor, Laudehr, Hingst, Garefrekes.
Brazil: Andreia - Elaine, Aline (Katia 88), Tania (Pretinha 81), Renata Costa, Daniela, Formiga, Maycon, Marta, Cristiane, Ester (Rosana 63).

CLUB FOOTBALL EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Oct 3
Besiktas (Tur) 0
Porto (Por) 1 (Quaresma 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 33,750. **Ref:** Vink (Hol)
Besiktas: Hakan Arikan - Serdar Kurtulus (Ali 71), Gokhan, Ibrahim Toraman, Ibrahim Uzulmez, Serdar Ozkan, Cisse, Tello, Delgado, Bobo (Marcio Nobre 27), Ibrahim Akin (Higuain 67).
Porto: Helton - Bosingwa, Bruno Alves, Stepanov, Fucile, Gonzalez, Paulo Assuncao, Raul Meireles (Leandro Lima 88), Quaresma, Lopez (Adriano 75), Sektioui (Cech 66).

Oct 3
Liverpool (Eng) 0
Marseille (Fra) 1 (Valbuena 77)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 41,355. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Liverpool: Reina - Finnan, Carragher, Hyypia, Fabio Aurelio (Voronin 70), Benayoun, Gerrard, Sissoko, Leto (Riise 52), Fernando Torres, Crouch (Kuijt 75).
Marseille: Mandanda - Bonnart, Rodriguez, Givet, Taiwo, Valbuena (Oruma 84), Cana, Ziani, Cheyrou, Zenden (Arrache 88), Niang (Cisse 70).

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Marseille	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Porto	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Liverpool	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Besiktas	2	0	0	2	0	3	0

Sep 18 Marseille-Besiktas 2-0
Sep 18 Porto-Liverpool..... 1-1
Oct 3 Besiktas-Porto 0-1
Oct 3 Liverpool-Marseille 0-1
Oct 24 Besiktas-Liverpool
Oct 24 Marseille-Porto
Nov 6 Liverpool-Besiktas
Nov 6 Porto-Marseille
Nov 28 Besiktas-Marseille
Nov 28 Liverpool-Porto
Dec 11 Marseille-Liverpool
Dec 11 Porto-Besiktas

Group B
Oct 3
Rosenborg (Nor) 0
Schalke (Ger) 2 (Jones 62, Kuranyi 89)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 21,361. **Ref:** Gilewski (Pol)
Rosenborg: Hirschfeld - Strand, Basma, Koppinen, Dorsin (Ya Konan 79), Skjelbred (Kone 68), Sapara, Riseth, Tettey, Traore, Iversen.
Schalke: Neuer - Rafinha, Westermann, Bordon, Howedes, Jones (Varela 84), Ernst, Rakitic (Grossmuller 75), Bajramovic, Kuranyi, Lovenkrands (Asamoah 64).

Oct 3
Valencia (Spa) 1 (Villa 9)
Chelsea (Eng) 2 (J Cole 21, Drogba 71)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 52,000. **Ref:** Rosetti (Ita)
Valencia: Hildebrand - Miguel, Albiol, Ivan Helguera, Moretti, Joaquin (Arizmendi 88), Albelda (Baraja 75), Marchena, Silva, Morientes (Zigic 69), Villa.
Chelsea: Cech - Paulo Ferreira, Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, A Cole, Makelele, Mikel (Alex 89), J Cole, Essien (Sidwell 84), Malouda (Kalou 86), Drogba.

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Valencia	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Schalke	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Rosenborg	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

Sep 18 Chelsea-Rosenborg..... 1-1
Sep 18 Schalke-Valencia 0-1
Oct 3 Rosenborg-Schalke..... 0-2
Oct 3 Valencia-Chelsea 1-2
Oct 24 Chelsea-Schalke
Oct 24 Rosenborg-Valencia
Nov 6 Schalke-Chelsea
Nov 6 Valencia-Rosenborg
Nov 28 Rosenborg-Chelsea
Nov 28 Valencia-Schalke
Dec 11 Chelsea-Valencia
Dec 11 Schalke-Rosenborg

Group C
Oct 3
Lazio (Ita) 2 (Pandev 32, 75)
Real Madrid (Spa) 2 (Van Nistelrooy 8, 61)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 80,246. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Lazio: Ballotta - Behrami (Scaloni 67), Stendardo, Cribari, Zauri, Mudingayi, Ledesma, Mutarelli, Mauri (Del Nero 79), Pandev, Rocchi (Makinwa 66).
Real Madrid: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Cannavaro, Heinze, Marcelo, Sneijder (Drenthe 88), Diarra, Guti, Robben (Higuain 79), Raul (Saviola 83), Van Nistelrooy.

Oct 3
Werder Bremen (Ger) 1 (Hugo Almeida 32)
Olympiakos (Gre) 3 (Stoltidis 73, Patsatzoglou 82, Kovacevic 87)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 37,500. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Werder: Vander - Pasanen, Mertesacker, Naldo, Tosic, Fritz (Borowski 63), Frings, Jensen, Diego, Hugo Almeida, Rosenberg (Sanogo 76).
Olympiakos: Nikopolidis - Torosidis (Pantos 86), Antzas, Raul Bravo, Domi (Julio Cesar 19), Patsatzoglou, Ledesma, Stoltidis, Galletti (Kovacevic 72), Lua Lua, Djordjevic.

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Real Madrid	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Lazio	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Werder	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

Sep 18 Olympiakos-Lazio..... 1-1
Sep 18 Real Madrid-Werder Bremen ... 2-1
Oct 3 Lazio-Real Madrid..... 2-2
Oct 3 Werder Bremen-Olympiakos 1-3
Oct 24 Real Madrid-Olympiakos
Oct 24 Werder Bremen-Lazio
Nov 6 Lazio-Werder Bremen

Nov 6 Olympiakos-Real Madrid
Nov 28 Lazio-Olympiakos
Nov 28 Werder Bremen-Real Madrid
Dec 11 Olympiakos-Werder Bremen
Dec 11 Real Madrid-Lazio

Group D

Oct 3
Benfica (Por) 0
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1 (Jadson 42)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Benfica: Quim - Nelson (Nuno Gomes 45), Luisao, Edcarlos, Leo, Maxi Pereira, Di Maria (Binya 61), Katsouranis, Rui Costa, Rodriguez, Cardozo.
Shakhtar: Pyatov - Srna, Chygrynskyi, Kucher, Rat, Ilsinho (Duljaj 79), Lewandowski (Hubschman 87), Fernandinho, Jadson (Castillo 77), Lucarelli, Brandao.

Oct 3
Celtic (Sco) 2 (McManus 61, McDonald 89)
Milan (Ita) 1 (Kaka pen 68)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 58,643. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Celtic: Boruc - Perrier-Doumbe (Kennedy 79), Caldwell, McManus, Naylor, Hartley, Donati, S Brown, Jarosik (Killen 84), McGeady (Nakamura 84), McDonald.
Milan: Dida (Kalac 90) - Oddo, Bonera, Nesta, Jankulovski, Gattuso, Pirlo, Ambrosini, Kaka, Seedorf (Gourcuff 55), Inzaghi (Gilardino 77).

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Celtic	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Milan	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Benfica	2	0	0	2	1	3	0

Sep 18 Milan-Benfica 2-1
Sep 18 Shakhtar Donetsk-Celtic 2-0
Oct 3 Benfica-Shakhtar Donetsk 0-1
Oct 3 Celtic-Milan 2-1
Oct 24 Benfica-Celtic
Oct 24 Milan-Shakhtar Donetsk
Nov 6 Celtic-Benfica
Nov 6 Shakhtar Donetsk-Milan
Nov 28 Benfica-Milan
Nov 28 Celtic-Shakhtar Donetsk
Dec 4 Milan-Celtic
Dec 4 Shakhtar Donetsk-Benfica

Group E

Oct 2
Lyon (Fra) 0
Rangers (Sco) 3 (McCulloch 23, Cousin 48, Beasley 53)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 38,076. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Lyon: Vercoutre - Reveillere (Clerc 81), Squillaci, Anderson, Grosso, Juninho, Bodmer (Ben Arfa 60), Kallstrom, Govou, Baros (Keita 60), Benzema.
Rangers: McGregor - Hutton, Cuellar, Weir, Papac, Hemdani, Beasley (Adam 90), Ferguson, Thomson, McCulloch (Novo 81), Cousin (Whittaker 66).

Oct 2
Stuttgart (Ger) 0
Barcelona (Spa) 2 (Puyol 53, Messi 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 51,300. **Ref:** Hansson (Swe)
Stuttgart: Schafer - Osorio (Marica 63), Tasci, Fernando Meira, Boka, Hilbert, Pardo, Farnerud (Magnin 76), Khedira (Meissner 76), Gomez, Cacau.
Barcelona: Valdes - Oleguer, Thuram, Marquez (Puyol 7; Silvinho 64), Abidal, Xavi, Iniesta, Deco, Messi, Henry, Ronaldinho (Bojan 82).

GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Rangers	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Stuttgart	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Lyon	2	0	0	2	0	6	0

Sep 19 Barcelona-Lyon 3-0
Sep 19 Rangers-Stuttgart 2-1
Oct 2 Lyon-Rangers 0-3
Oct 2 Stuttgart-Barcelona 0-2
Oct 23 Rangers-Barcelona
Oct 23 Stuttgart-Lyon
Nov 7 Barcelona-Rangers
Nov 7 Lyon-Stuttgart
Nov 27 Lyon-Barcelona
Nov 27 Stuttgart-Rangers
Dec 12 Barcelona-Stuttgart
Dec 12 Rangers-Lyon

Group F

Oct 2
Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 1 (Vaschuk 28)
Sporting Lisbon (Por) 2 (Tonel 14, Anderson Polga 38)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 36,000. **Ref:** Layec (Fra)
Dynamo: Shovkovskyi - Ghioane (Husiev 56), Mikhalik, Vaschuk, Gavrancic, El Kaddouri, Yussuf, Correa, Diogo Rincon, Milevskyi (Kleber 58), Shatskikh.
Sporting: Stojkovic - Abel, Tonel, Anderson Polga, Ronny, Joao Moutinho, Miguel Veloso, Romagnoli (Paredes 77), Vukcevic (Izmailov 68), Yannick (Gladstone 90), Liedson.

Oct 2
Manchester United (Eng) 1 (Rooney 70)
Roma (Ita) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 73,652. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Man Utd: Kuszczak - O'Shea, Vidic, Ferdinand, Evra, Cristiano Ronaldo, Carrick, Scholes, Nani (Giggs 80), Rooney (Anderson 85), Saha (Tevez 66).
Roma: Curci - Cicinho, Mexes, Juan, Tonetto, De Rossi, Aquilani (Pizarro 62), Giuly (Esposito 80), Perrotta, Mancini (Vucinic 74), Totti.

GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
Roma	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Sporting	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Dynamo	2	0	0	2	1	4	0

Sep 19 Roma-Dynamo Kyiv 2-0
Sep 19 Sporting Lisbon-Man Utd 0-1
Oct 2 Dynamo Kyiv-Sporting Lisbon .. 1-2
Oct 2 Man Utd-Roma 1-0
Oct 23 Dynamo Kyiv-Man Utd
Oct 23 Roma-Sporting Lisbon
Nov 7 Man Utd-Dynamo Kyiv
Nov 7 Sporting Lisbon-Roma
Nov 27 Dynamo Kyiv-Roma
Nov 27 Man Utd-Sporting Lisbon
Dec 12 Roma-Man Utd
Dec 12 Sporting Lisbon-Dynamo Kyiv

Group G

Oct 2
CSKA Moscow (Rus) 2 (Krasic 50, Vagner Love pen 53)
Fenerbahce (Tur) 2 (Alex 9, Deivid 85)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Kircher (Ger)
CSKA: Mandrykin - V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, A Berezutsky, Semberas, Rahimic, Krasic, Dudu Cearense (Aldonin 90), Zhirkov, Vagner Love, Jo.
Fenerbahce: Volkan Demirel - Onder, Lugano (Gokhan 77), Edu (Yasin 72), Roberto Carlos, Alex, Mehmet Aurelio, Deniz (Kazim 72), Gokcek, Kezman, Deivid.

Oct 2
Internazionale (Ita) 2 (Ibrahimovic pen 15, 31)
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Inter: Julio Cesar - Zanetti, Samuel, Chivu, Maxwell, Figo, Stankovic, Cambiasso, Solari (Bolzoni 70), Crespo (Suazo 61), Ibrahimovic.
Sent off: Chivu 65min, Suazo 90min.
PSV: Gomes - Kromkamp (Bakkal 69), Addo, Alcides, Salcido, Simons, Culina, Perez, Mendez (Koevermans 56), Lazovic, Farfan (Aissati 75).

GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Inter	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
PSV	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
CSKA	2	0	1	1	3	4	1

Sep 19 Fenerbahce-Internazionale 1-0
Sep 19 PSV-CSKA Moscow 2-1
Oct 2 CSKA Moscow-Fenerbahce 2-2
Oct 2 Internazionale-PSV 2-0
Oct 23 CSKA Moscow-Internazionale
Oct 23 PSV-Fenerbahce
Nov 7 Fenerbahce-PSV
Nov 7 Internazionale-CSKA Moscow
Nov 27 CSKA Moscow-PSV
Nov 27 Internazionale-Fenerbahce
Dec 12 Fenerbahce-CSKA Moscow
Dec 12 PSV-Internazionale

Group H

Oct 2
Sevilla (Spa) 4 (Kanoute 8, Luis Fabiano 27, Escude 58, Kone 68)
Slavia Prague (Cze) 2 (Pudil 19, Kalivoda 90)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Baskakov (Rus)
Sevilla: Palop - Daniel Alves, Boulahrouz, Escude, Dragutinovic, Jesus Navas (Duda 75), Keita, Poulsen, Adriano (Hinkel 81), Luis Fabiano (Kone 64), Kanoute.
Slavia: Vaniak - Drizdal (Ivana 46), Sourek, Suchy, Hubacek, Krajcik, Svec, Janda (Kalivoda 63), Belaid (Volesak 70), Pudil, Vlcek.

Oct 2
Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 0
Arsenal (Eng) 1 (Van Persie 76)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 21,000. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Steaua: Zapata - Marin, Baciu, Rada, Emeghara, Nicolita, Petre, Neaga (Zaharia 77), Surdu (Badoi 84), Dica, Badea (Iacob 60).
Arsenal: Almunia - Sagna, Toure, Senderos, Clichy, Eboue (Gilberto Silva 73), Fabregas, Flamini, Hleb, Adebayor, Van Persie.

GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Sevilla	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Slavia	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Steaua	2	0	0	2	1	3	0

Sep 19 Arsenal-Sevilla 3-0
Sep 19 Slavia Prague-Steaua 2-1
Oct 2 Sevilla-Slavia Prague 4-2
Oct 2 Steaua-Arsenal 0-1
Oct 23 Arsenal-Slavia Prague
Oct 23 Sevilla-Steaua
Nov 7 Slavia Prague-Arsenal
Nov 7 Steaua-Sevilla
Nov 27 Sevilla-Arsenal
Nov 27 Steaua-Slavia Prague
Dec 12 Arsenal-Steaua
Dec 12 Slavia Prague-Sevilla

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round; third-placed sides enter UEFA Cup at the last-32 stage

UEFA CUP

1st round

The 16 losing teams in the Champions League 3rd qualifying round entered at this stage

1st legs - September 20; 2nd legs - October 2/4
Aberdeen (Sco) v Dnipro (Ukr) 0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1; Aberdeen on away goals); AEK Athens (Gre) v Salzburg (Aut) 3-0, 0-1 (agg 3-1); Anderlecht (Blg) v Rapid Wien (Aut) 1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1); Aris Salonika (Gre) v Zaragoza (Spa) 1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2; Aris on away goals); Artmedia (Slk) v Panathinaikos (Gre) 1-2, 0-3 (agg 1-5); Atletico Madrid (Spa) v Erciyesspor (Tur) 4-0, 5-0 (agg 9-0); Austria Wien (Aut) v Valerenga (Nor) 2-0, 2-2 (agg 4-2); Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Uniao Leiria (Por) 3-1, 2-3 (agg 5-4); Bayern Munich (Ger) v Belenenses (Por) 1-0, 2-0 (agg 3-0); Brann (Nor) v Club Brugge (Blg) 0-1, 2-1 (agg 2-2; Brann on away goals); Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) v Elfsborg (Swe) 1-2, 1-0 (agg 2-2; Elfsborg on away goals); Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) v Ajax (Hol) 0-1, 3-2 (agg 3-3; Dinamo on away goals); Empoli (Ita) v Zurich (Swi) 2-1, 0-3 (agg 2-4); Everton (Eng) v Metalist (Ukr) 1-1, 3-2 (agg 4-3); Getafe (Spa) v Twente (Hol) 1-0, 2-3 (aet) (agg 3-3; Getafe on away goals); Groclin (Pol) v Red Star Belgrade (Ser) 0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2); Groningen (Hol) v Fiorentina (Ita) 1-1, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-2; Fiorentina 4-3 on pens); Hammarby (Swe) v Sporting Braga (Por) 2-1, 0-4 (agg 2-5); Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) v AIK Stockholm (Swe) 0-0, 1-0 (agg 1-0); Heerenveen (Hol) v Helsingborgs (Swe) 5-3, 1-5 (agg 6-8); Larisa (Gre) v Blackburn (Eng) 2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2); Lens (Fra) v FC Copenhagen (Den) 1-1, 1-2 (aet) (agg 2-3); Litex Lovech (Bul) v Hamburg (Ger) 0-1, 1-3 (agg 1-4); Lokomotiv Sofia (Bul) v Rennes (Fra) 1-3, 2-1 (agg 3-4); Midtjylland (Den) v Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 1-3, 0-2 (agg 1-5); Mlada Boleslav (Cze) v Palermo (Ita) 0-1, 1-0 (aet) (agg 1-1; Mlada Boleslav 4-2 on pens); Nurnberg (Ger) v Rapid Bucharest (Rom) 0-0, 2-2 (agg 2-2; Nurnberg on away goals); Pacos Ferreira (Por) v AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1); Rabotnicki (Mac) v Bolton (Eng) 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2); Sampdoria (Ita) v AaB Aalborg (Den) 2-2, 0-0 (agg 2-2; AaB on away goals); Sarajevo (Bos) v Basle (Swi) 1-2, 0-6 (agg 1-8); Sion (Swi) v Galatasaray (Tur) 3-2, 1-5 (agg 4-7); Sochaux (Fra) v Panionios (Gre) 0-2, 1-0 (agg 1-2); Sparta Prague (Cze) v OB Odense (Den) 0-0, 0-0 (aet) (agg 0-0; Sparta 4-3 on pens); Spartak Moscow (Rus) v Hacken (Swe) 5-0, 3-1 (agg 8-1); Tampere United (Fin) v Bordeaux (Fra) 2-3, 1-1 (agg 3-4); Tottenham (Eng) v Anorthosis (Cyp) 6-1, 1-1 (agg 7-2); Toulouse (Fra) v CSKA Sofia (Bul) 0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1; Toulouse on away goals); Villarreal (Spa) v BATE Borisov (Bls) 4-1, 2-0 (agg 6-1); Zenit St Petersburg (Rus) v Standard Liege (Bul) 3-0, 1-1 (agg 4-1).

AUSTRIA

Sep 21: Mattersburg 5 Ried 1.
Sep 22: Austria Karnten 1 LASK Linz 4.
Sep 23: Austria Wien 1 Sturm Graz 0; Altach 1 Salzburg 1; Wacker Innsbruck 1 Rapid Wien 1.
Sep 26: Sturm Graz 3 Wacker Innsbruck 0; Rapid Wien 1 Mattersburg 0; Ried 3 Altach 0; Salzburg 3 Austria Karnten 0; LASK Linz 1 Austria Wien 1.
Sep 29: Mattersburg 3 Wacker Innsbruck 1; Ried 3 Austria Karnten 1; LASK Linz 2 Sturm Graz 2; Rapid Wien 0 Altach 2.
Sep 30: Salzburg 0 Austria Wien 1.
Oct 5: Sturm Graz 0 Mattersburg 0.
Oct 7: Austria Wien 2 Ried 1; LASK Linz 4 Salzburg 1; Austria Karnten 1 Rapid Wien 2.

AUSTRIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria Wien	14	8	5	1	21	10	29
LASK Linz	14	7	4	3	23	17	25
Mattersburg	14	6	5	3	26	16	23
Rapid Wien	14	7	2	5	19	16	23
Salzburg	14	6	4	4	21	15	22
Sturm Graz	14	5	6	3	26	17	21
Ried	14	6	1	7	21	22	19
Altach	13	3	2	8	16	26	11
A Karnten	14	3	2	9	12	29	11
Wacker	13	0	5	8	10	27	5

BELGIUM

Saturday, September 22

FC Brussels 2 (Fort 71, Gorius 84)
St Truiden 0 Att: 4,000

Cercle Brugge 1 (Portier 29)
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Dosunmu 8) Att: 6,575

Dender 0
Mons 3 (Dalmat 3, Landu-Tubi 50, Roussel pen 75) Att: 3,500

Gent 1 (Olufade 38)
Roeselare 1 (Dissa 4) Att: 9,000

Mouscron 2 (Sapina 9, Custovic pen 79)
Lokeren 0 Att: 4,650

Zulte Waregem 2 (D'Haemers 73, Roelandts 80)
Mechelen 0 Att: 8,000

Sunday, September 23

Charleroi 1 (Akpala 52)
Club Brugge 1 (Sterchele pen 83) Att: 13,270

Genk 1 (Barda 78)
Anderlecht 1 (Serhat 87) Att: 24,976

Monday, September 24

Standard 2 (Toama 1, 78)
Westerlo 1 (Dirar 19) Att: 24,470

Friday, September 28

Mons 1 (Dalmat 72)
Genk 1 (Vandooren 5) Att: 4,000

Saturday, September 29

Anderlecht 0
Charleroi 1 (Smolders 45) Att: 25,025

Club Brugge 1 (Sonck 62)
Mouscron 0 Att: 24,204

Lokeren 0
FC Brussels 1 (Mokulu 67) Att: 4,900

Roeselare 3 (Dissa 17, 70, Mirvic 83)
Zulte Waregem 2 (Leye 10, 60) Att: 7,000

St Truiden 0
Standard 0 Att: 10,000

Westerlo 1 (Van den Eede 78)
Cercle Brugge 1 (De Sutter 14) Att: 5,000

Sunday, September 30
Germinal Beerschot 2 (Losada pen 75, Ederson 87)
Gent 2 (Ruiz 29, Maric 40) Att: 9,000

Mechelen 2 (Ivens pen 25, pen 75)
Dender 2 (Munyaneza 15, 40) Att: 11,000

Friday, October 5
Charleroi 1 (Akpala 1)
Mouscron 3 (Tomou Bayard 39, Grondin 68, Fellahi 83) Att: 9,426

Saturday, October 6
Cercle Brugge 5 (Gombami 15, De Smet 30, 69, Serebrennikov pen 67, pen 72)
St Truiden 1 (Coulibaly 14) Att: 7,941

Dender 0
Lokeren 1 (Mbayo 53) Att: 3,517

Genk 2 (Ljubojevic 40, Alex da Silva 68)
Mechelen 1 (Imschoot 79) Att: 24,064

Gent 1 (Gillet 19)
Westerlo 1 (Dirar 89) Att: 8,997

Zulte Waregem 2 (Leandro Barrios 17, 76)
Mons 1 (Adriano Duarte 80) Att: 6,000

Sunday, October 7
FC Brussels 1 (Matumona 89)
Club Brugge 3 (Sonck 11, Simaeys 33, Djokic 43) Att: 8,000

Roeselare 2 (Dissa 30, 61)
Anderlecht 2 (Polak 78, Frutos pen 89) Att: 8,400

Standard 3 (Fellaini 28, De Camargo 35, Witsel 43)
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Dosunmu 20) Att: 25,000

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Standard	9	7	2	0	24	7	23
Club Brugge	9	5	3	1	14	9	18
Genk	9	5	3	1	12	11	18
Cercle Brugge	9	5	2	2	20	11	17
Mouscron	9	5	1	3	16	11	16
Anderlecht	9	4	4	1	14	9	16
Gent	9	3	5	1	18	11	14
Charleroi	9	4	2	3	11	9	14
Lokeren	9	4	2	3	8	7	14
Zulte Waregem	9	4	2	3	13	14	14
Roeselare	9	2	5	2	10	13	11
Germinal B	9	2	3	4	9	12	9
Westerlo	9	2	3	4	5	8	9
Mons	9	2	2	5	11	14	8
FC Brussels	9	2	1	6	6	15	7
Dender	9	1	3	5	7	16	6
Mechelen	9	0	4	5	8	15	4
St Truiden	9	0	1	8	6	20	1

LEADING GOALSCORERS
7 Milan Jovanovic (Standard)
6 Joseph Akpala (Charleroi)

BULGARIA

Sep 22: Marek 2 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Levski 4 Cherno More 0; Chernomorets Burgas 2 Slavia 0; Botev 1 Beroe 0; Belasitsa 2 Spartak Varna 1.
Sep 23: Lovech 4 Vidima-Rakovski 1; CSKA 3 Lokomotiv Sofia 1; Vihren 1 Pirin 1.
Sep 28: Pirin 1 Lovech 3; Lokomotiv Sofia 3 Vihren 2.
Sep 29: Vidima-Rakovski 1 Belasitsa 0; Spartak Varna 1 Levski 2; Slavia 0 CSKA 1; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 4 Botev 0; Beroe 2 Chernomorets Burgas 1.
Sep 30: Cherno More 0 Marek 0.
Oct 6: Vihren 1 Slavia 1; Spartak Varna 0 Vidima-Rakovski 0; Botev 1 Cherno More 1; Levski 4 Marek 2; Chernomorets Burgas 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0.
Oct 7: Belasitsa 0 Pirin 1; Lovech 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 1; CSKA 1 Beroe 0.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	8	7	1	0	14	3	22
Levski	8	6	1	1	16	6	19
Pirin	8	5	1	2	11	6	16
Lovech	8	4	3	1	14	7	15
Lok Sofia	8	4	3	1	16	10	15
Chernomorets	8	4	1	3	13	12	13
Slavia	8	3	2	3	11	9	11
Botev	8	2	3	3	13	14	9
Lok Plovdiv	8	2	2	4	10	10	8
Vihren	8	2	2	4	7	9	8
Marek	8	2	2	4	6	11	8
V-Rakovski	8	2	2	4	5	14	8
Belasitsa	8	2	1	5	4	13	7
Spartak Varna	8	1	3	4	5	9	6
Cherno More	8	1	3	4	5	12	6
Beroe	8	1	2	5	3	8	5

CROATIA

Sep 22: Rijeka 4 Hajduk 0; Slaven 4 Zadar 2; Zagreb 3 Inter 0; Medimurje 0 Cibalia 1; Osijek 1 Sibenik 1.
Sep 23: Varteks 4 Dinamo 3.
Sep 29: Dinamo 1 Rijeka 0; Sibenik 1 Hajduk 0; Osijek 4 Medimurje 0; Cibalia 3 Zagreb 1; Inter 1 Slaven 0; Zadar 2 Varteks 0.
Oct 6: Rijeka 2 Zadar 0; Varteks 1 Inter 2; Slaven 2 Cibalia 2; Zagreb 0 Osijek 2; Medimurje 2 Sibenik 2.
Oct 7: Hajduk 1 Dinamo 2.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	11	10	0	1	35	10	30
Rijeka	11	7	2	2	22	10	23
Zadar	11	6	2	3	22	16	20
Slaven	11	5	2	4	20	13	17
Osijek	11	5	2	4	15	15	17
Hajduk	11	4	4	3	17	13	16
Cibalia	11	4	3	4	13	14	15
Sibenik	11	3	6	2	18	22	15
Inter	11	4	1	6	10	22	13
Zagreb	11	3	2	6	12	15	11
Medimurje	11	1	2	8	11	27	5
Varteks	11	1	0	10	12	30	3

CZECH REPUBLIC

Sep 19: Brno 2 Teplice 2.
Sep 22: Zlin 1 Teplice 0; Liberec 2 Plzen 0.
Sep 23: Ceske Budejovice 1 Zizkov 1; Bohemians 2 Slavia 0; Brno 2 Jablonec 1; Most 2 Kladno 2; Ostrava 0 Olomouc 1.
Sep 24: Sparta 0 Mlada Boleslav 1.
Sep 28: Slavia 7 Zlin 1.
Sep 29: Olomouc 1 Liberec 0.
Sep 30: Teplice 1 Plzen 0; Ceske Budejovice 1 Most 0; Kladno 1 Brno 2; Mlada Boleslav 2 Bohemians 0; Jablonec 0 Sparta 2.
Oct 1: Zizkov 0 Ostrava 2.
Oct 6: Zlin 0 Olomouc 0; Liberec 1 Kladno 1.
Oct 7: Bohemians 0 Ceske Budejovice 2; Most 2 Jablonec 1; Ostrava 0 Teplice 0.
Oct 8: Sparta 0 Slavia 2; Plzen 3 Zizkov 1; Brno 0 Mlada Boleslav 3.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slavia	9	7	1	1	18	6	22
Teplice	9	6	2	1	13	6	20
Ostrava	9	5	3	1	16	6	18
Sparta	9	5	1	3	11	7	16
M Boleslav	9	4	3	2	12	7	15
Olomouc	9	3	4	2	6	6	13
Zlin	9	3	4	2	8	12	13
Plzen	9	3	3	3	8	8	12
Brno	9	3	3	3	11	13	12
C Budejovice	9	3	2	4	10	12	11
Kladno	9	2	3	4	14	15	9
Most	9	1	4	4	14	19	7
Bohemians	9	1	4	4	4	10	7
Jablonec	9	1	3	5	5	10	6
Liberec	9	1	3	5	5	10	6
Zizkov	9	1	3	5	12	20	6

DENMARK

Sep 22: AGF 1 Nordsjaelland 2.
Sep 23: Horsens 1 Randers 0; Lyngby 3 AaB 4; Esbjerg 2 Midtjylland 0; Brondby 0 FC Copenhagen 1.
Sep 24: OB 4 Viborg 0.
Sep 29: FC Copenhagen 2 Lyngby 0.
Sep 30: Midtjylland 2 AGF 0; AaB 3 Viborg 2; Brondby 1 Randers 1; OB 1 Esbjerg 1.
Oct 1: Nordsjaelland 0 Horsens 0.
Oct 6: Viborg 1 Brondby 2.
Oct 7: Randers 3 Midtjylland 0; Horsens 2 Lyngby 1; Esbjerg 0 OB 0; FC Copenhagen 1 Nordsjaelland 1.
Oct 8: AGF 3 AaB 5.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Copenhagen	12	7	4	1	16	6	25
Midtjylland	12	7	2	3	19	13	23
AaB	12	7	2	3	26	22	23
Horsens	12	6	4	2	20	15	22
OB	12	4	7	1	19	10	19
Randers	12	5	3	4	20	9	18
Nordsjaelland	12	4	5	3	16	13	17
Esbjerg	12	4	3	5	25	21	15
Brondby	12	2	4	6	12	21	10
Viborg	12	3	1	8	11	27	10
AGF	12	2	2	8	9	20	8
Lyngby	12	1	3	8	9	25	6

ENGLAND

Saturday, September 22
Arsenal 5 (Diaby 10, Adebayor 26, pen 50, 79, Fabregas 70)
Derby 0 Att: 60,122

Fulham 3 (Davies 13, Bouazza 48, Murphy 75)
Manchester City 3 (Petrov 36, 60, Mpenza 50) Att: 24,674

Liverpool 0
Birmingham 0 Att: 44,215

Middlesbrough 2 (Arca 15, Downing 67)
Sunderland 2 (Leadbitter 2, Miller 89) Att: 30,675

Reading 2 (Kitson 29, Harper 90)
Wigan 1 (Bent 50) Att: 21,379

Sunday, September 23
Aston Villa 2 (Carew 14, Agbonlahor 62)
Everton 0 Att: 38,235

Blackburn 0
Portsmouth 1 (Kanu 25) Att: 19,506

Bolton 1 (Ivan Campo 39)
Tottenham 1 (Keane 34) Att: 20,308

Manchester United 2 (Tevez 45, Saha pen 90)
Chelsea 0 Att: 75,663

Newcastle 3 (Viduka 2, 41, N'Zogbia 75)
West Ham 1 (Ashton 32) Att: 50,104

Saturday, September 29
Birmingham 0
Manchester United 1 (Cristiano Ronaldo 51) Att: 26,526

Chelsea 0
Fulham 0 Att: 41,837

Derby 1 (Miller 19)
Bolton 1 (Anelka 32) Att: 31,503

Manchester City 3 (Petrov 38, Mpenza 47, Elano 87)
Newcastle 1 (Martins 29) Att: 40,606

Portsmouth 7 (Mwaruwari 7, 37, 70, Hreidarsson 55, Kranjcar 75, Davis 81, Muntari pen 90)
Reading 4 (Hunt 45, Kitson 48, Long 79, Shorey 90) Att: 20,102

Sunderland 1 (Leadbitter 90)
Blackburn 2 (Bentley 53, Santa Cruz 55) Att: 41,252

West Ham 0
Arsenal 1 (Van Persie 13) Att: 34,966

Wigan 0
Liverpool 1 (Benayoun 75) Att: 24,311

Sunday, September 30
Everton 2 (Lescott 7, Pienaar 58)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 31,885

Monday, October 1
Tottenham 4 (Berbatov 20, Chimbonda 69, Keane pen 82, Kaboul 90)
Aston Villa 4 (Laursen 22, 33, Agbonlahor 40, Gardner 59) Att: 36,094

Saturday, October 6
Aston Villa 1 (Gardner 24)
West Ham 0 Att: 40,842

Manchester United 4 (Tevez 54, Cristiano Ronaldo 59, 76, Rooney 82)
Wigan 0 Att: 75,300

Sunday, October 7
Arsenal 3 (Van Persie 7, 80, Senderos 14)
Sunderland 2 (Wallace 25, Jones 48) Att: 60,098

Blackburn 2 (Bentley 15, McCarthy pen 56)
Birmingham 1 (Jerome 68) Att: 19,316

Bolton 0
Chelsea 1 (Kalou 41) Att: 20,059

Fulham 0
Portsmouth 2 (Mwaruwari 50, Hreidarsson 52) Att: 20,774

Liverpool 2 (Voronin 12, Fernando Torres 90)
Tottenham 2 (Keane 45, 47) Att: 43,986

Manchester City 3 (Riggott og 10, Elano 33, 63)
Middlesbrough 1 (Hutchinson 89) Att: 40,438

Newcastle 3 (Butt 42, Emre 86, Owen 89)
Everton 2 (Johnson 53, Given og 90) Att: 50,152

Reading 1 (Doyle 63)
Derby 0 Att: 23,091

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	8	7	1	0	19	6	22
Man Utd	9	6	2	1	11	2	20
Man City	9	6	1	2	14	7	19
Liverpool	8	4	4	0	14	4	16
Portsmouth	9	4	3	2	17	12	15
Blackburn	8	4	3	1	9	6	15
Chelsea	9	4	3	2	8	8	15
Aston Villa	8	4	2	2	12	8	14
Newcastle	8	4	2	2	13	10	14
Everton	9	4	1	4	12	11	13
West Ham	8	3	1	4	9	8	10
Reading	9	3	1	5	10	18	10
Birmingham	9	2	2	5	8	12	8
Wigan	9	2	2	5	8	12	8
Middlesbrough	9	2	2	5	10	16	8
Sunderland	9	2	2	5	10	16	8
Tottenham	9	1	4	4	16	18	7
Fulham	9	1	4	4	12	16	7
Bolton	9	1	2	6	9	14	5
Derby	9	1	2	6	5	22	5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
6 Emmanuel Adebayor (Arsenal)
6 Benjani Mwaruwari (Portsmouth)
5 Nicolas Anelka (Bolton)
5 Robin Van Persie (Arsenal)

FRANCE

Saturday, September 22
Auxerre 2 (Niculae 20, 25)
Marseille 0 Att: 18,510

Caen 1 (Gouffran 9)
Metz 2 (N'Diaye 37, Gygax 66) Att: 17,883

Nancy 2 (Hadji 80, 86)
Lorient 0 Att: 18,151

Nice 3 (Kone 7, 16, Hellebuyck 82)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 11,252

Strasbourg 0
Le Mans 1 (N'Dri 36) Att: 17,971

Toulouse 1 (Bergougnoux 23)
Lens 1 (Monterrubio 39) Att: 15,036

Valenciennes 1 (Audel 11)
Monaco 0 Att: 14,225

Sunday, September 23
Lyon 1 (Govou 58)
Lille 1 (Bastos 17) Att: 32,658

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Bordeaux 2 (Micoud 10, Bellion 47) Att: 37,108

Rennes 0
Sochaux 2 (Dalmat 37, Isabey 58) Att: 22,589

Saturday, September 29
Lyon 3 (Fabio Santos 41, Kallstrom 81, Benzema 90)
Lens 0 Att: 38,420

Sunday, September 30
Caen 2 (Compan 13, Nivet 55)
Toulouse 1 (Emana 90) Att: 17,119

Friday, October 5
Monaco 1 (Koller 74)
Nancy 3 (Kim 32, 47, Dia 39) Att: 8,851

Saturday, October 6
Le Mans 2 (De Melo 31, Matsui 61)
Nice 0 Att: 9,604

Lens 2 (Pieroni pen 24, Mangane 78)
Auxerre 0 Att: 31,139

Lille 3 (Kluivert pen 5, Lichtsteiner 44, Plestan 66)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 13,739

Lorient 0
Caen 0 Att: 10,215

Metz 1 (Francois 63)
Strasbourg 2 (Mouloungui 42, Renteria 52) Att: 15,140

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Ceara 57)
Rennes 3 (Leroy 19, Briand 74, Wiltord 84) Att: 35,436

Saint-Etienne 1 (Dernis 90)
Marseille 0 Att: 32,004

Sunday, October 7
Bordeaux 1 (Jussie 85)
Lyon 3 (Anderson 5, Benzema 24, Kallstrom 61) Att: 31,919

Sochaux 0
Toulouse 1 (Emana 73) Att: 12,783

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	10	7	1	2	21	9	22
Nancy	9	7	1	1	18	6	22
Le Mans	10	6	1	3	15	11	19
Bordeaux	10	5	3	2	13	9	18
Rennes	10	5	3	2	12	8	18
Valenciennes	10	5	2	3	13	12	17
Strasbourg	10	4	3	3	10	7	15
Nice	10	4	2	4	10	9	14
Saint-Etienne	10	4	2	4	10	9	14
Toulouse	9	4	2	3	11	11	14
Lille	10	2	7	1	12	9	13
Monaco	10	4	1	5	14	12	13
Lorient	10	3	4	3	10	11	13
Paris SG	10	2	5	3	8	11	11
Lens	9	2	3	4	5	8	9
Auxerre	10	3	0	7	6	17	9
Caen	9	2	2	5	7	12	8
Marseille	10	1	4	5	7	13	7
Sochaux	10	1	4	5	8	15	7
Metz	10	1	2	7	5	16	5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 Karim Benzema (Lyon)
6 David Bellion (Bordeaux)
6 Tulio De Melo (Le Mans)

GERMANY

Friday, September 21
Bochum 0
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 25,536

Saturday, September 22
Energie Cottbus 1 (Sorensen 31)
Wolfsburg 2 (Dzeko 22, Krzynowek 83) Att: 15,269

Hamburg 1 (Van der Vaart 53)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 52,365

Hansa Rostock 2 (Hahnge 34, Kern pen 53)
Duisburg 0 Att: 13,000

Hertha Berlin 3 (Pantelic 43, Lucio 54, Okoronkwo 76)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Petric 31, 88) Att: 52,237

Schalke 3 (Kuranyi 24, Asamoah 54, Rafinha pen 65)
Arminia Bielefeld 0 Att: 61,482

Werder Bremen 4 (Hugo Almeida 3, 4, Sanogo 15, Diego 90)
Stuttgart 1 (Gomez 13) Att: 39,282

Sunday, September 23
Hannover 0
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Kiessling 50, Vidal 68, Gekas pen 74) Att: 32,161

Karlsruhe 1 (Porcello 52)
Bayern Munich 4 (Toni 5, Klose 20, Altintop 49, Ze Roberto 75) Att: 30,702

Tuesday, September 25
Borussia Dortmund 0
Hamburg 3 (Guerrero 7, Van der Vaart 42, Olic 64) Att: 72,300

Duisburg 0
Schalke 2 (Altintop 3, Kuranyi 75) Att: 31,500

Hertha Berlin 1 (Pantelic 2)
Hansa Rostock 3 (Rahn 40, Hahnge 54, Dorn 74) Att: 48,670

Wolfsburg 1 (Josue 65)
Werder Bremen 1 (Diego 48) Att: 25,533

Wednesday, September 26
Arminia Bielefeld 0
Hannover 2 (Huszti pen 54, Pinto 85) Att: 21,800

Bayern Munich 5 (Klose 59, 75, 89, Demichelis 63, Toni 69)
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 69,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Karlsruhe 1 (Franz 51) Att: 48,500

Nurnberg 1 (Mintal pen 73)
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Kiessling 40, Barnetta 76) Att: 40,458

Stuttgart 1 (Hilbert 50)
Bochum 0 Att: 34,000

Friday, September 28
Schalke 1 (Rafinha pen 44)
Hertha Berlin 0 Att: 61,482

Saturday, September 29
Bayer Leverkusen 0
Bayern Munich 1 (Toni 40) Att: 22,500

Bochum 3 (Sestak 43, 66, Mieciel 62)
Nurnberg 3 (Kluge 40, 60, Misimovic 81) Att: 18,615

Hamburg 2 (Reinhardt 17, Van der Vaart 70)
Wolfsburg 2 (Grafite pen 57, Dejagah 88) Att: 54,055

Hansa Rostock 2 (Rathgeber 16, Orestes 18)
Stuttgart 1 (Gomez 73) Att: 19,000

Karlsruhe 3 (Porcello 25, Eggimann 64, Freis 75)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Worns 41) Att: 29,290

Werder Bremen 8 (Niemeyer 17, Hugo Almeida 35, 88, Sanogo 41, 44, Mertesacker 59, Rosenberg 66, Diego 86)
Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Wichniarek 37) Att: 40,120

Sunday, September 30
Energie Cottbus 2 (Angelov 8, Rangelov 18)
Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Amanatidis 49, 79) Att: 14,290

Hannover 2 (Schulz 7, 63)
Duisburg 1 (Ishiaku 20) Att: 28,775

Friday, October 5
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Tinga 17, Federico 70)
Bochum 1 (Mieciel 35) Att: 72,200

Saturday, October 6
Arminia Bielefeld 0
Hamburg 1 (Van der Vaart 49) Att: 22,800

Duisburg 1 (Ailton 15)
Werder Bremen 3 (Jensen 7, Sanogo 57, Andreasen 87) Att: 31,006

Hertha Berlin 0
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 48,719

Schalke 0
Karlsruhe 2 (Timm 68, 83) Att: 61,482

Stuttgart 0
Hannover 2 (Huszti pen 8, 52) Att: 49,000

Wolfsburg 1 (Dzeko 89)
Hansa Rostock 0 Att: 26,127

Sunday, October 7
Bayern Munich 3 (Toni 31, 81, Ze Roberto 40)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 69,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Kyrgiakos 54, 79)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Russ og 72) Att: 47,600

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	9	7	2	0	25	3	23
Karlsruhe	9	6	0	3	13	11	18
W Bremen	9	5	2	2	21	14	17
Hamburg	9	5	2	2	12	7	17
Schalke	9	4	4	1	15	8	16
Hannover	9	5	1	3	13	13	16
E Frankfurt	9	4	3	2	11	9	15
B Leverkusen	9	4	2	3	12	6	14
Hertha Berlin	9	4	1	4	11	12	13
Wolfsburg	9	3	3	3	13	13	12
B Dortmund	9	4	0	5	14	17	12
Stuttgart	9	3	1	5	10	14	10
A Bielefeld	9	3	1	5	12	22	10
Bochum	9	2	3	4	12	15	9
H Rostock	9	3	0	6	10	14	9
Duisburg	9	2	0	7	10	16	6
Nurnberg	9	1	3	5	9	16	6
E Cottbus	9	0	4	5	5	18	4

LEADING GOALSCORERS
8 Miroslav Klose (Bayern Munich)
8 Luca Toni (Bayern Munich)
7 Rafael Van der Vaart (Hamburg)
6 Boubacar Sanogo (Werder Bremen)

GREECE

Sep 22: PAOK 3 Iraklis 0; Xanthi 2 Asteras 0.
Sep 23: Apollon 0 Aris 0; Panionios 2 Levadiakos 0; Ergotelis 0 Panathinaikos 3; Larisa 1 Veria 1; Olympiakos 6 OFI 2; AEK 2 Atromitos 0.
Sep 26: Veria 0 AEK 1.
Sep 29: Aris 1 Olympiakos 1; Panathinaikos 2 PAOK 0; Atromitos 2 Larisa 0.
Sep 30: Levadiakos 0 AEK 4; Apollon 0 Panionios 2; Asteras 0 Iraklis 0; Veria 1 Xanthi 1; OFI 4 Ergotelis 1.
Oct 6: Olympiakos 1 Apollon 0; PAOK 2 OFI 2.
Oct 7: Ergotelis 0 Aris 1; Iraklis 1 Veria 1; Xanthi 0 Atromitos 1; Larisa 3 Levadiakos 3; Asteras 1 Panathinaikos 0; Panionios 0 AEK 3.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEK	4	4	0	0	10	0	12
Atromitos	4	3	0	1	5	3	9
Olympiakos	4	2	2	0	8	3	8
Panathinaikos	4	2	1	1	5	1	7
Xanthi	4	2	1	1	4	2	7
Panionios	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
OFI	4	2	1	1	11	11	7
Aris	4	1	3	0	2	1	6
Larisa	4	1	2	1	5	6	5
PAOK	4	1	1	2	5	5	4
Asteras	4	1	1	2	1	3	4
Veria	4	0	3	1	3	4	3
Ergotelis	4	1	0	3	2	8	3
Iraklis	4	0	2	2	1	5	2
Apollon	4	0	1	3	2	6	1
Levadiakos	4	0	1	3	4	11	1

HOLLAND

Friday, September 21
VVV 1 (Linssen 82)
NAC 3 (Lurling 1, Zwaanswijk 68, De Graaf pen 88) Att: 5,800

Saturday, September 22
Sparta 1 (Boukhari 31)
Heracles 1 (Everton 63) Att: 10,121

Vitesse 0
De Graafschap 2 (Frankel 68, Powel 90) Att: 19,240

Willem II 1 (Kargbo 45)
Roda JC 0 Att: 11,500

Sunday, September 23
AZ 2 (De Zeeuw 45, Dembele 90)
Ajax 3 (Huntelaar 33, Suarez 43, 65) Att: 16,556

Excelsior 1 (Den Ouden 40)
Groningen 3 (Nevland 45, Berg 55, Levchenko pen 63) Att: 2,500

Heerenveen 2 (Bradley 50, Sulejmani 85)
Utrecht 3 (Nelisse 2, 83, Rossini 90) Att: 25,000

PSV 4 (Perez 35, 43, Mendez 39, Koevermans 89)
Feyenoord 0 Att: 35,000

Twente 3 (Wielaert 6, N'Kufo 13, Wilkshire 57)
NEC 0 Att: 13,000

Saturday, September 29
Feyenoord 2 (Makaay 22, Hofs 27)
Heerenveen 0 Att: 40,000

Groningen 1 (Lovre 50)
Sparta 0 Att: 19,304

NAC 1 (Amoah 65)
PSV 1 (Perez 75) Att: 15,980

Roda JC 3 (Janssen 9, Lamah 12, Saeijs 48)
Excelsior 3 (Den Ouden pen 56, Voskamp 78, 89) Att: 12,900

Sunday, September 30
Ajax 6 (Luque 15, 18, Maduro 27, Begois og 31, Delorge 77, Huntelaar 89)
VVV 1 (Soltani 3) Att: 49,126

De Graafschap 0
Twente 0 Att: 11,000

Heracles 2 (Everton 25, Maas pen 56)
AZ 1 (Dembele 14) Att: 8,500

NEC 1 (Worm pen 66)
Willem II 0 Att: 12,000

Utrecht 2 (Van Dijk pen 62, Nelisse 85)
Vitesse 4 (Swerts 4, Sprockel 16, Junker 49, Megrelishvili 78) Att: 20,000

Friday, October 5
VVV 1 (Leemans 74)
Utrecht 2 (Nelisse 5, Vandenbergh 75) Att: 5,850

Saturday, October 6
Excelsior 2 (Steur 82, Voskamp 90)
NEC 0 Att: 2,483

NAC 1 (Sikora 4)
De Graafschap 0 Att: 15,280

PSV 3 (Koevermans 22, 44, Farfan 76)
Willem II 0 Att: 33,100

Sunday, October 7
AZ 2 (Ari 17, De Zeeuw 83)
Groningen 2 (Berg 71, Svejdik 90) Att: 16,378

Heerenveen 9 (Afonso Alves 9, 16, 17, 67, 70, 74, 76, Sibon 60, 80)
Heracles 0 Att: 24,700

Sparta 2 (Dissels 51, De Roover 79)
Ajax 2 (Huntelaar 67, De Jong 90) Att: 10,800

Twente 0
Roda JC 1 (De Fauw 70) Att: 13,000

Vitesse 0
Feyenoord 1 (Hofs 54) Att: 18,450

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Feyenoord	7	6	0	1	16	5	18
Ajax	7	5	2	0	26	9	17
PSV	7	5	2	0	16	1	17
NAC	7	4	1	2	10	11	13
Twente	7	3	3	1	10	4	12
Vitesse	7	4	0	3	8	7	12
Groningen	7	3	2	2	11	9	11
Roda JC	7	3	2	2	11	9	11
Utrecht	7	3	2	2	13	14	11
De Graafschap	7	3	2	2	10	13	11
Heerenveen	7	2	2	3	20	14	8
AZ	7	2	2	3	14	10	8
Sparta	7	0	5	2	11	13	5
Willem II	7	1	2	4	4	11	5
Excelsior	7	1	1	5	9	19	4
NEC	7	1	1	5	2	13	4
Heracles	7	1	1	5	5	20	4
VVV	7	1	0	6	11	24	3

LEADING GOALSCORERS
9 Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Ajax)
7 Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)

HUNGARY

Sep 21: Tatabanya 2 Diosgyor 2; Honved 2 Zalaegerszeg 1.
Sep 22: Nyiregyhaza 1 Debrecen 1; Gyor 4 Fehervar 1; Rakospalota 1 Ujpest 1; Sopron 1 Paks 1; Kaposvar 0 MTK 3.
Sep 24: Vasas 0 Siofok 0.
Sep 28: Zalaegerszeg 3 Vasas 3.
Sep 29: Kaposvar 1 Gyor 1; Paks 2 Fehervar 1; Ujpest 4 Sopron 0; Diosgyor 0 Rakospalota 1; Debrecen 4 Tatabanya 1; Siofok 0 Nyiregyhaza 1.
Oct 1: MTK 1 Honved 2.
Oct 5: Fehervar 1 Ujpest 2.
Oct 6: Honved 0 Kaposvar 1; Nyiregyhaza 2 Zalaegerszeg 1; Gyor 3 Paks 3; Tatabanya 2 Siofok 2; Rakospalota 0 Debrecen 4; Sopron 0 Diosgyor 1.
Oct 8: Vasas 0 MTK 3.

HUNGARY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Honved	11	8	1	2	24	12	25
Debrecen	11	7	2	2	26	12	23
MTK	11	6	4	1	25	11	22
Ujpest	11	6	4	1	22	10	22
Nyiregyhaza	11	5	3	3	10	9	18
Gyor	11	4	5	2	16	13	17
Fehervar	11	5	1	5	22	18	16
Kaposvar	11	4	4	3	14	17	16
Zalaegerszeg	11	4	3	4	20	18	15
Vasas	11	3	4	4	14	19	13
Rakospalota	11	4	1	6	11	18	13
Paks	11	3	2	6	18	24	11
Sopron	11	2	4	5	7	15	10
Diosgyor	11	1	6	4	10	17	9
Siofok	11	1	4	6	13	18	7
Tatabanya	11	0	2	9	11	32	2

ITALY

Saturday, September 22
Milan 1 (Seedorf 44)
Parma 1 (Pisanu 73) Att: 51,026

Udinese 2 (Di Natale 5, 62)
Reggina 0 Att: 12,782

Sunday, September 23
Atalanta 2 (Langella 43, Zampagna 90)
Lazio 1 (Mutarelli 69) Att: 15,000

Cagliari 0
Palermo 1 (Zaccardo 14) Att: 8,000

Catania 0
Fiorentina 1 (Mutu 4) Att: 18,000

Empoli 0
Napoli 0 Att: 10,000

Livorno 2 (De Vezze 1, Loviso pen 63)
Inter 2 (Ibrahimovic 35, pen 72) Att: 10,000

Roma 2 (Totti 30, 36)
Juventus 2 (Trezeguet 17, Iaquinta 88) Att: 70,000

Sampdoria 0
Genoa 0 Att: 35,000

Torino 1 (Dellafiore 24)
Siena 1 (Maccarone 53) Att: 18,086

Wednesday, September 26
Catania 1 (Martinez 50)
Empoli 0 Att: 15,887

Fiorentina 2 (Gamberini 24, Mutu pen 79)
Roma 2 (Mancini 19, Giuly 36) Att: 36,056

Genoa 3 (Borriello 21, 47, pen 74)
Udinese 2 (Gyan 51, Mesto 76) Att: 22,253

Inter 3 (Ibrahimovic 24, 49, Figo 58)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 42,013

Juventus 4 (Legrottaglie 48, Salihamidzic 50, Trezeguet 75, Palladino 90)
Reggina 0 Att: 19,050

Lazio 3 (Rocchi 48, 83, Pandev 60)
Cagliari 1 (Acquafresca 69) Att: 17,652

Napoli 1 (Sosa 85)
Livorno 0 Att: 37,163

Palermo 2 (Diana 73, Miccoli 90)
Milan 1 (Seedorf 10) Att: 30,761

Parma 2 (Reginaldo 62, Corradi 64)
Torino 0 Att: 12,932

Siena 1 (Loria 31)
Atalanta 1 (Doni pen 61) Att: 8,377

Saturday, September 29
Livorno 0
Fiorentina 3 (Osvaldo 45, 67, Santana 69) Att: 10,000

Roma 1 (Perrotta 53)
Inter 4 (Ibrahimovic pen 29, Crespo 57, Cruz 60, Cordoba 68) Att: 60,000

Sunday, September 30
Cagliari 1 (Foggia pen 7)
Siena 0 Att: 10,000

Empoli 3 (Pozzi 47, Giovinco 82, Vannucchi pen 90)
Palermo 1 (Cavani 39) Att: 8,000

Milan 1 (Kaka pen 48)
Catania 1 (Martinez 25) Att: 49,835

Napoli 1 (Domizzi pen 52)
Genoa 2 (Cannavaro og 12, Sculli 89)
Match played behind closed doors

Reggina 1 (Cozza 8)
Lazio 1 (Kolarov 73) Att: 10,169

Sampdoria 3 (Bellucci 4, Sammarco 57, Cassano 83)
Atalanta 0 Att: 21,000

Torino 0
Juventus 1 (Trezeguet 90) Att: 24,000

Udinese 2 (Quagliarella 78, Zapata 90)
Parma 1 (Corradi 72) Att: 12,704

Saturday, October 6
Atalanta 0
Udinese 0 Att: 10,000

Inter 2 (Cruz 20, 36)
Napoli 1 (Sosa 84) Att: 46,536

Sunday, October 7
Catania 1 (Sardo 20)
Livorno 0 Att: 16,000

Fiorentina 1 (Mutu pen 89)
Juventus 1 (Iaquinta 23) Att: 40,000

Genoa 2 (Borriello 59, Di Vaio 73)
Cagliari 0 Att: 23,000

Lazio 1 (Mauri 23)
Milan 5 (Ambrosini 16, Kaka pen 33, 52, Gilardino 70, 79) Att: 30,000

Palermo 1 (Amauri 90)
Reggina 1 (Amoruso 89) Att: 22,845

Parma 0
Roma 3 (Totti 2, 82, Mancini 21) Att: 18,000

Siena 3 (Maccarone pen 65, Locatelli 79, Galloppa 82)
Empoli 0 Att: 7,000

Torino 1 (Corini 88)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 16,400

ITALY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	7	5	2	0	16	5	17
Juventus	7	4	2	1	16	7	14
Roma	7	4	2	1	15	8	14
Fiorentina	7	3	4	0	13	7	13
Genoa	7	3	3	1	8	7	12
Palermo	7	3	2	2	10	10	11
Udinese	7	3	2	2	8	10	11
Milan	7	2	4	1	13	7	10
Napoli	7	3	1	3	10	6	10
Atalanta	7	2	4	1	8	8	10
Catania	7	2	3	2	5	6	9
Sampdoria	7	2	2	3	5	7	8
Torino	7	1	4	2	7	9	7
Lazio	7	1	4	2	8	11	7
Cagliari	7	2	1	4	7	10	7
Siena	7	1	3	3	7	9	6
Parma	7	1	3	3	7	11	6
Empoli	7	1	2	4	4	10	5
Reggina	7	0	4	3	5	13	4
Livorno	7	0	2	5	6	17	2

LEADING GOALSCORERS
7 Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Inter)
7 David Trezeguet (Juventus)
6 Kaka (Milan)
6 Francesco Totti (Roma)

NORWAY

Sep 22: Viking 3 Aalesund 0.
Sep 23: Stromsgodset 3 Start 2; Rosenborg 2 Sandefjord 0; Brann 4 Odd Grenland 0; Tromso 2 Lyn 1; Stabaek 3 Lillestrom 1.
Sep 24: Valerenga 2 Fredrikstad 0.
Sep 29: Viking 3 Stromsgodset 0.
Sep 30: Odd Grenland 1 Valerenga 4; Aalesund 2 Tromso 3; Lyn 3 Stabaek 2; Fredrikstad 4 Rosenborg 3; Lillestrom 1 Brann 5.
Oct 1: Sandefjord 1 Start 3.
Oct 6: Start 3 Fredrikstad 1.
Oct 7: Stabaek 4 Aalesund 2; Tromso 2 Viking 1; Stromsgodset 4 Sandefjord 0; Rosenborg 4 Odd Grenland 1; Valerenga 1 Lillestrom 3.
Oct 8: Brann 3 Lyn 1.

NORWAY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brann	23	16	3	4	53	32	51
Stabaek	23	12	6	5	42	33	42
Viking	23	12	5	6	44	33	41
Lillestrom	23	11	6	6	42	26	39
Tromso	23	11	3	9	40	37	36
Rosenborg	23	10	5	8	47	34	35
Valerenga	23	9	6	8	30	28	33
Fredrikstad	23	8	8	7	34	37	32
Lyn	23	8	4	11	36	41	28
Stromsgodset	23	8	4	11	31	39	28
Aalesund	23	8	3	12	36	51	27
Start	23	6	7	10	33	38	25
Odd Grenland	23	5	3	15	27	43	18
Sandefjord	23	4	3	16	25	48	15

POLAND

Sep 21: Korona 1 Legia 0.
Sep 22: Widzew 2 Cracovia 0; Zaglebie Lubin 2 LKS 1; Gornik Zabrze 1 Odra 0; Lech 6 Ruch Chorzow 2; Belchatow 2 Jagiellonia 0.
Sep 23: Zaglebie Sosnowiec 1 Groclin 3; Wisla Krakow 5 Polonia Bytom 0.
Sep 28: Legia 4 Belchatow 1; Polonia Bytom 1 Zaglebie Lubin 0.
Sep 29: Jagiellonia 2 Widzew 1; Odra 1 Lech 2; LKS 0 Korona 1; Cracovia 1 Zaglebie Sosnowiec 0; Groclin 3 Gornik Zabrze 1.
Sep 30: Ruch Chorzow 0 Wisla Krakow 3.
Oct 5: Odra 2 Ruch Chorzow 0; Widzew 0 LKS 0.
Oct 6: Korona 2 Cracovia 0; Lech 1 Legia 0; Gornik Zabrze 4 Zaglebie Sosnowiec 2; Wisla Krakow 5 Jagiellonia 0; Belchatow 0 Polonia Bytom 3.
Oct 7: Zaglebie Lubin 1 Groclin 2.

POLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla K	10	8	2	0	29	5	26
Legia	10	8	0	2	20	4	24
Korona	10	7	1	2	13	7	22
Lech	10	6	2	2	22	13	20
Groclin	10	6	1	3	17	12	19
Gornik Z	10	5	1	4	14	15	16
Zaglebie L	10	4	2	4	12	12	14
Belchatow	10	3	4	3	9	10	13
Cracovia	10	4	1	5	7	8	13
Jagiellonia	10	3	2	5	8	18	11
Polonia B	10	3	1	6	6	18	10
Odra	10	2	3	5	11	16	9
Ruch C	10	2	2	6	12	20	8
LKS	10	1	4	5	6	9	7
Widzew	10	1	4	5	9	14	7
Zaglebie S*	10	2	0	8	9	23	2

**4pts deducted for the club's part in Poland's match-fixing scandal*

PORTUGAL

Friday, September 21
Naval 1 (Paulao 13)
Guimaraes 4 (Flavio Meireles 31, Fajardo 33, Mrdakovic 49, Ghilas 77)

Sunday, September 23
Leixoes 1 (Nuno Diogo 79)
Nacional 1 (Lipatin 15)

Maritimo 2 (Kanu 26, Makukula 90)
Belenenses 0

Pacos Ferreira 0
Porto 2 (Lopez 11, 67)

Sporting Braga 0
Benfica 0

Sporting Lisbon 2 (Joao Moutinho pen 65, Purovic 86)
Setubal 2 (Elias 41, Matheus 78)

Uniao Leiria 0
Estrela Amadora 0

Monday, September 24
Boavista 0
Academica 0

Saturday, September 29
Benfica 0
Sporting Lisbon 0

Porto 2 (Lopez 14, 74)
Boavista 0

Sunday, September 30
Belenenses 1 (Roncatto 43)
Pacos Ferreira 0

Estrela Amadora 1 (Tiago Gomes 47)
Maritimo 1 (Fernando 58)

Guimaraes 1 (Geromel 51)
Sporting Braga 0

Nacional 2 (Gabriel 49, Cassio 90)
Naval 0

Setubal 2 (Matheus 61, Edinho 90)
Uniao Leiria 0

Monday, October 1
Academica 1 (Lito 77)
Leixoes 1 (Hugo Morais 63)

Saturday, October 6
Sporting Lisbon 3 (Izmailov 59, 68, Tonel 85)
Guimaraes 0

Sunday, October 7
Academica 0
Porto 1 (Gonzalez pen 28)

Leixoes 0
Naval 1 (Marcelinho pen 18)

Maritimo 0
Setubal 0

Uniao Leiria 1 (Cadu da Silva 2)
Benfica 2 (Nuno Gomes 15, 65)

Monday, October 8
Boavista 2 (Marcelao 29, 67)
Belenenses 4 (Ze Pedro 25, 90, Silas 61, Gomez 69)

Pacos Ferreira 2 (Furtado 71, Renato Queiros 73)
Estrela Amadora 1 (Anselmo 85)

Sporting Braga 1 (Linz pen 86)
Nacional 0

PORTUGAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	7	7	0	0	12	1	21
Sporting Lisbon	7	4	2	1	12	4	14
Maritimo	7	4	2	1	10	3	14
Benfica	7	3	4	0	9	2	13
Guimaraes	7	3	3	1	9	7	12
Setubal	7	2	5	0	9	5	11
Sporting Braga	7	3	1	3	7	7	10
Belenenses	7	3	1	3	8	9	10
Leixoes	7	0	6	1	6	7	6
E Amadora	7	1	3	3	6	8	6
Nacional	7	1	3	3	4	7	6
Academica	7	1	3	3	4	9	6
Pacos Ferreira	7	1	2	4	5	10	5
Naval	7	1	2	4	4	13	5
Boavista	7	0	4	3	3	9	4
Uniao Leiria	7	0	3	4	3	10	3

LEADING GOALSCORERS
6 Lisandro Lopez (Porto)
4 Fajardo (Guimaraes)
4 Ariza Makukula (Maritimo)
4 Matheus (Setubal)

ROMANIA

Sep 21: Pandurii 0 Farul 1.
Sep 22: Gloria Bistrita 2 Otelul 1; Urziceni 2 Ceahlaul 0; UTA 1 Steaua 1; Dacia 2 Poli Timisoara 2.
Sep 23: Vaslui 2 Univ Craiova 0; CFR Cluj 2 Poli Iasi 1; Rapid 0 Gloria Buzau 0; Dinamo 2 Univ Cluj 1.
Sep 29: Gloria Buzau 1 UTA 0; Steaua 1 Vaslui 0; Farul 0 Urziceni 1; Poli Timisoara 3 Gloria Bistrita 1.
Sep 30: Otelul 2 Univ Cluj 1; Univ Craiova 1 Dacia 0; Poli Iasi 1 Pandurii 0; CFR Cluj 1 Dinamo 1.
Oct 5: Gloria Bistrita 0 Univ Craiova 1.
Oct 6: Pandurii 0 CFR Cluj 1; UTA 0 Ceahlaul 1; Univ Cluj 1 Poli Timisoara 2.
Oct 7: Dinamo 6 Otelul 1; Vaslui 4 Gloria Buzau 1; Rapid 2 Farul 0; Urziceni 1 Poli Iasi 0; Dacia 1 Steaua 2.

ROMANIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CFR Cluj	10	7	3	0	16	7	24
Urziceni	10	7	2	1	17	8	23
Poli Timisoara	10	6	3	1	22	16	21
Vaslui	10	6	2	2	20	10	20
Rapid	9	5	4	0	15	7	19
Steaua	9	5	3	1	8	4	18
Dinamo	9	5	2	2	20	10	17
Gloria Bistrita	10	4	3	3	13	14	15
Ceahlaul	9	4	0	5	10	12	12
Otelul	10	4	0	6	14	21	12
Pandurii	9	3	1	5	9	9	10
Poli Iasi	10	3	1	6	11	15	10
UTA	10	2	3	5	10	13	9
Univ Craiova	10	3	0	7	8	13	9
Gloria Buzau	10	2	2	6	5	18	8
Farul	9	2	1	6	4	12	7
Dacia	10	1	3	6	9	15	6
Univ Cluj	10	0	3	7	12	19	3

RUSSIA

Sep 21: Khimki 1 Rostov 0.
Sep 22: FC Moscow 4 Dinamo 1; Spartak Nalchik 1 Saturn 3; Luch-Energiya 1 Kuban 0.
Sep 23: Lokomotiv 4 Spartak Moscow 3; CSKA 1 Amkar 0; Rubin 1 Zenit 4; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Tom 1.
Sep 26: Rubin 2 Spartak Nalchik 1.
Sep 29: Spartak Moscow 2 Khimki 0; Luch-Energiya 2 Rubin 0; Zenit 2 CSKA 1; Amkar 1 Lokomotiv 0.
Sep 30: Saturn 0 FC Moscow 0; Rostov 0 Spartak Nalchik 1; Tom 2 Kuban 0; Dinamo 1 Kryliya Sovetov 1.
Oct 6: Kuban 3 Kryliya Sovetov 2; Saturn 2 Dinamo 1; FC Moscow 1 Rostov 0; Khimki 1 Amkar 0.
Oct 7: Lokomotiv 1 Zenit 0; CSKA 4 Luch-Energiya 0; Rubin 1 Tom 3.
Oct 8: Spartak Nalchik 1 Spartak Moscow 2.

RUSSIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit	26	14	7	5	45	31	49
Spartak M	26	14	7	5	42	28	49
FC Moscow	26	13	7	6	33	26	46
CSKA	26	10	11	5	36	22	41
Saturn	26	10	11	5	30	23	41
Lokomotiv	26	11	6	9	35	35	39
Amkar	26	9	10	7	25	20	37
Dinamo	26	10	7	9	35	32	37
Tom	26	7	10	9	34	32	31
Khimki	26	7	10	9	23	25	31
Rubin	26	9	4	13	28	33	31
Spartak N	26	7	8	11	26	32	29
Luch-Energiya	26	7	7	12	22	31	28
Kuban	26	6	10	10	22	32	28
Kryliya S	26	6	8	12	26	37	26
Rostov	26	1	11	14	15	38	14

SCOTLAND

Saturday, September 22
Falkirk 1 (Latapy 74)
Motherwell 0 Att: 5,245

Gretna 3 (Cowan 14, 36, Jenkins 86)
Dundee United 2 (Bauben 9, Wilkie 65) Att: 1,624

Inverness 2 (Wyness 64, Brewster 90)
Hearts 1 (Black og 34) Att: 4,918

Kilmarnock 0
St Mirren 0 Att: 5,596

Sunday, September 23
Hibernian 3 (Fletcher 5, Gathuessi 41, Shiels 87)
Celtic 2 (McGeady 26, Caldwell 66) Att: 16,125

Rangers 3 (McCulloch 45, Naismith 65, Boyd 88)
Aberdeen 0 Att: 49,046

Saturday, September 29
Aberdeen 2 (Diamond 16, Jamie Smith 18)
Gretna 0 Att: 10,279

Celtic 3 (McDonald 7, 67, 72)
Dundee United 0 Att: 57,006

Hibernian 4 (Donaldson 12, pen 31, pen 78, Antoine-Curier 65)
Kilmarnock 1 (Nish 76) Att: 14,500

Inverness 4 (Wyness 7, 54, Duncan 18, Black 32)
Falkirk 2 (Milne 28, Arfield 47) Att: 4,011

Motherwell 1 (Porter 24)
Rangers 1 (Boyd pen 67) Att: 10,009

Sunday, September 30
St Mirren 1 (Corcoran 78)
Hearts 3 (Driver 40, Stewart 56, Velicka 83) Att: 4,233

Saturday, October 6
Dundee United 1 (Dods 78)
Motherwell 0 Att: 6,286

Hearts 4 (Ksanavicius 5, Zaliukas 27, Velicka 58, Nade 68)
Falkirk 2 (Barrett 87, Moutinho 89) Att: 15,800

Kilmarnock 2 (Koudou 1, Nish 56)
Inverness 2 (Ford og 22, Cowie 61) Att: 4,456

Rangers 0
Hibernian 1 (Murphy 61) Att: 50,440

Sunday, October 7
Aberdeen 4 (Severin pen 43, pen 71, Miller 63, 88)
St Mirren 0 Att: 12,841

Gretna 1 (Yantorno 37)
Celtic 2 (Killen 86, McDonald 90) Att: 6,011

SCOTLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	9	7	1	1	29	7	22
Hibernian	9	6	3	0	18	9	21
Rangers	9	6	1	2	24	9	19
Dundee Utd	9	5	1	3	12	8	16
Hearts	9	4	2	3	16	15	14
Motherwell	9	4	1	4	9	10	13
Kilmarnock	9	3	3	3	10	12	12
Aberdeen	9	3	2	4	13	13	11
Falkirk	9	2	1	6	13	23	7
Inverness	9	2	1	6	10	21	7
St Mirren	9	2	1	6	5	18	7
Gretna	9	1	1	7	9	23	4

LEADING GOALSCORERS
5 Scott McDonald (Celtic)
5 Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (Celtic)

SERBIA

Sep 22: Smederevo 0 Borac 1; Mladost Lucani 1 Partizan 4; Napredak 0 Banat 2; Cukaricki 0 OFK 2.
Sep 23: Hajduk Kula 1 Bezanija 0; Red Star 1 Vojvodina 1.
Sep 29: Bezanija 1 Cukaricki 2; OFK 1 Napredak 1; Banat 0 Mladost Lucani 0; Partizan 2 Red Star 2; Vojvodina 2 Smederevo 1; Borac 2 Hajduk Kula 0.
Oct 6: Hajduk Kula 1 Vojvodina 2; Smederevo 1 Partizan 1; Mladost Lucani 2 OFK 2; Cukaricki 0 Napredak 0; Bezanija 1 Borac 2.
Oct 7: Red Star 2 Banat 0.

SERBIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	8	6	2	0	19	7	20
Vojvodina	8	4	3	1	10	7	15
Borac	8	4	2	2	6	4	14
Red Star	7	3	4	0	8	3	13
OFK	8	3	3	2	11	8	12
Banat	8	2	3	3	8	10	9
Cukaricki	8	2	3	3	5	9	9
Hajduk K	7	2	2	3	5	6	8
Mladost L	8	1	5	2	5	8	8
Smederevo	8	2	2	4	4	7	8
Napredak	8	1	2	5	3	10	5
Bezanija	8	1	1	6	5	10	4

SPAIN

Saturday, September 22
Barcelona 2 (Messi 73, pen 80)
Sevilla 1 (Kanoute 90) Att: 77,399

Recreativo 2 (Javi Guerrero 53, 60)
Espanyol 1 (Riera 4) Att: 18,500

Sunday, September 23
Almeria 1 (Mane 33)
Mallorca 1 (Guiza 78) Att: 15,000

Atletico Madrid 4 (Raul Garcia 11, Aguero 69, Forlan 76, Simao 86)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 45,000

Betis 1 (Rafael Sobis 86)
Valencia 2 (Miguel 68, Joaquin 82) Att: 35,000

Getafe 0
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 8,000

Levante 1 (Rigano 77)
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Aduritz 8, 73) Att: 13,884

Valladolid 1 (Pedro Lopez 70)
Real Madrid 1 (Saviola 87) Att: 22,000

Villarreal 2 (Rossi 85, 90)
Murcia 0 Att: 15,000

Zaragoza 2 (Matuzalem 17, Milito 70)
Osasuna 1 (Juanfran 24) Att: 30,000

Tuesday, September 25
Sevilla 2 (Jarque og 60, Kone 68)
Espanyol 3 (Angel 29, Luis Garcia 54, Tamudo 88) Att: 40,000

Wednesday, September 26
Athletic Bilbao 0
Atletico Madrid 2 (Aguero 13, Forlan 77) Att: 39,000

Barcelona 4 (Messi 5, 11, Iniesta 22, Marquez 45)
Zaragoza 1 (Zapater 9) Att: 75,000

Deportivo La Coruna 0
Recreativo 2 (Carlos Martins 13, Javi Guerrero 47) Att: 13,000

Mallorca 4 (Nunes 48, Arango 50, 87, Victor 83)
Valladolid 2 (Ogbeche 6, Victor 26) Att: 13,200

Murcia 0
Almeria 1 (Felipe Melo 41) Att: 24,250

Osasuna 4 (Pandiani 32, 52, Juanfran 57, Javi Garcia 77)
Levante 1 (Ettien 34) Att: 15,405

Racing Santander 0
Villarreal 2 (Nihat 39, Rossi 77) Att: 15,036

Valencia 2 (Silva 16, Villa 32)
Getafe 1 (Braulio 76) Att: 45,000

Thursday, September 27
Real Madrid 2 (Raul 66, Julio Baptista 84)
Betis 0 Att: 75,000

Saturday, September 29
Levante 1 (Viqueira 72)
Barcelona 4 (Henry 17, 24, 49, Messi 51) Att: 20,229

Zaragoza 2 (D'Alessandro 52, Sergio Garcia 86)
Sevilla 0 Att: 30,000

Sunday, September 30
Almeria 0
Racing Santander 1 (Garay 6) Att: 14,000

Atletico Madrid 2 (Raul Garcia 37, Aguero 81)
Osasuna 0 Att: 48,000

Betis 3 (Xisco 58, Rafael Sobis 77, Edu 90)
Mallorca 0 Att: 35,000

Espanyol 1 (Tamudo 45)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 21,550

Getafe 0
Real Madrid 1 (Sergio Ramos 65) Att: 14,000

Recreativo 0
Valencia 1 (Villa 6) Att: 16,000

Valladolid 1 (Llorente 48)
Murcia 4 (De Lucas 27, Fernando Baiano 75, Ivan Alonso 80, Abel 87) Att: 14,521

Villarreal 1 (Fuentes 62)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 18,000

Saturday, October 6
Valencia 1 (Baraja 5)
Espanyol 2 (Riera 19, Luis Garcia 80) Att: 45,000

Sunday, October 7
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Etxeberria 31)
Almeria 1 (Felipe Melo 62) Att: 37,000

Barcelona 3 (Deco 14, Messi 18, Xavi 89)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 89,976

Mallorca 4 (Ibagaza pen 53, Arango 70, 78, Ramis 90)
Getafe 2 (Sousa 1, 47) Att: 15,000

Murcia 0
Betis 0 Att: 26,140

Osasuna 3 (Javi Venta og 22, Dady 35, Javi Garcia 79)
Villarreal 2 (Rossi 20, Godin 37) Att: 16,648

Racing Santander 2 (Smolarek 52, Tchite 90)
Valladolid 0 Att: 14,554

Real Madrid 2 (Van Nistelrooy 73, Higuain 90)
Recreativo 0 Att: 75,000

Sevilla 0
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Riki 73) Att: 38,000

Zaragoza 3 (Sergio Garcia 64, Ricardo Oliveira 72, 82)
Levante 0 Att: 29,000

SPAIN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	7	6	1	0	16	3	19
Barcelona	7	5	2	0	16	4	17
Villarreal	7	5	0	2	11	8	15
Valencia	7	5	0	2	10	9	15
Espanyol	7	4	1	2	10	8	13
Atletico Madrid	7	3	2	2	11	7	11
Mallorca	7	3	2	2	13	10	11
Zaragoza	7	3	2	2	11	9	11
R Santander	7	3	2	2	5	7	11
Murcia	7	2	3	2	7	6	9
Osasuna	6	2	2	2	8	7	8
Almeria	7	2	2	3	8	8	8
Recreativo	7	2	2	3	7	10	8
Dep La Coruna	7	2	2	3	4	8	8
Sevilla	6	2	0	4	11	10	6
Betis	7	1	3	3	7	8	6
Athletic Bilbao	7	1	3	3	5	9	6
Valladolid	7	1	2	4	8	15	5
Getafe	7	0	2	5	5	13	2
Levante	7	0	1	6	3	17	1

LEADING GOALSCORERS
6 Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
5 Sergio Aguero (Atletico Madrid)
5 Giuseppe Rossi (Villarreal)
4 Luis Garcia (Espanyol)
4 Ricardo Oliveira (Zaragoza)

SWEDEN

Sep 22: Brommapojkarna 1 Halmstads 1.
Sep 23: Trelleborgs 1 Kalmar 3.
Sep 24: AIK 1 Djurgardens 1; Orebro 4 Helsingborgs 3; Gefle 2 Malmo 1; Elfsborg 1 Hammarby 2.
Sep 25: GAIS 0 IFK Gothenburg 1.
Sep 29: Brommapojkarna 1 Elfsborg 1; Djurgardens 4 Orebro 1.
Sep 30: Halmstads 0 Gefle 0; Helsingborgs 1 Trelleborgs 1; AIK 0 GAIS 0.
Oct 1: IFK Gothenburg 3 Hammarby 0; Kalmar 2 Malmo 0.
Oct 6: Malmo 0 IFK Gothenburg 2.
Oct 7: Trelleborgs 0 AIK 0; Gefle 0 Djurgardens 2; GAIS 2 Brommapojkarna 1.
Oct 8: Elfsborg 1 Halmstads 1; Hammarby 0 Helsingborgs 2; Orebro 1 Kalmar 3.

SWEDEN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
IFK Goth'burg	24	12	7	5	42	23	43
Djurgardens	24	12	7	5	37	22	43
Kalmar	24	13	3	8	39	31	42
AIK	24	10	8	6	30	24	38
Elfsborg	24	9	10	5	37	27	37
Halmstads	24	9	9	6	32	30	36
Hammarby	24	10	3	11	31	30	33
Helsingborgs	24	8	8	8	40	33	32
Malmo	24	8	7	9	26	25	31
GAIS	24	7	8	9	23	31	29
Gefle	24	7	7	10	23	29	28
Orebro	24	5	7	12	25	43	22
Trelleborgs	24	4	8	12	21	36	20
Bromm'karna	24	4	8	12	19	41	20

SWITZERLAND

Sep 22: Thun 0 Lucerne 1; St Gallen 1 Aarau 1.
Sep 23: Zurich 4 Grasshopper 0; Neuchatel Xamax 0 Basle 3; Sion 1 Young Boys 2.
Sep 26: Zurich 2 Basle 2; St Gallen 5 Grasshopper 3; Young Boys 4 Aarau 1; Neuchatel Xamax 3 Lucerne 3.
Sep 27: Sion 2 Thun 1.
Sep 29: Grasshopper 3 Young Boys 3; Lucerne 2 Zurich 2.
Sep 30: Thun 1 Neuchatel Xamax 1; Basle 3 St Gallen 0; Aarau 2 Sion 0.
Oct 6: St Gallen 0 Thun 4; Young Boys 6 Lucerne 1.
Oct 7: Zurich 1 Neuchatel Xamax 0; Aarau 0 Basle 3; Sion 0 Grasshopper 1.

SWITZERLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	12	8	2	2	26	15	26
Zurich	12	7	4	1	31	11	25
Young Boys	12	6	4	2	31	21	22
Neuchatel X	12	3	6	3	16	17	15
Sion	12	4	2	6	12	17	14
Lucerne	12	2	7	3	19	27	13
Thun	12	3	3	6	13	16	12
Grasshopper	12	3	3	6	19	24	12
Aarau	12	2	6	4	15	20	12
St Gallen	12	3	1	8	12	26	10

TURKEY

Sep 21: Ankaragucu 1 Istanbul BB 0; Manisaspor 1 Trabzonspor 1.
Sep 22: Konyaspor 1 Genclerbirligi 1; Besiktas 3 Denizlispor 2; Kayserispor 3 Ankaraspor 1.
Sep 23: Genclerbirligi Oftas 1 Gaziantepspor 2; Rizespor 0 Sivasspor 2; Bursaspor 1 Fenerbahce 1; Kasimpasa 0 Galatasaray 1.
Sep 28: Fenerbahce 2 Ankaragucu 0.
Sep 29: Galatasaray 2 Besiktas 1; Genclerbirligi Oftas 2 Rizespor 0.
Sep 30: Istanbul BB 4 Manisaspor 1; Gaziantepspor 1 Ankaraspor 0; Sivasspor 3 Bursaspor 2; Denizlispor 2 Kayserispor 0; Genclerbirligi 3 Kasimpasa 1; Trabzonspor 1 Konyaspor 0.
Oct 5: Kasimpasa 0 Trabzonspor 0.
Oct 6: Ankaraspor 0 Denizlispor 0; Bursaspor 1 Genclerbirligi Oftas 1; Manisaspor 1 Fenerbahce 1.
Oct 7: Ankaragucu 2 Sivasspor 2; Konyaspor 3 Istanbul BB 2; Kayserispor 1 Galatasaray 1; Rizespor 2 Gaziantepspor 1; Besiktas 1 Genclerbirligi 0.

TURKEY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Galatasaray	8	6	2	0	18	4	20
Sivasspor	8	6	1	1	15	6	19
Besiktas	8	5	2	1	9	5	17
Trabzonspor	8	3	4	1	10	6	13
Fenerbahce	8	3	4	1	9	7	13
Kayserispor	8	3	3	2	13	10	12
Istanbul BB	8	4	0	4	12	10	12
Gaziantepspor	8	4	0	4	11	11	12
Ankaragucu	8	3	3	2	10	10	12
Denizlispor	8	2	3	3	11	11	9
Manisaspor	8	2	3	3	12	15	9
Genclerbirligi	8	2	2	4	10	12	8
G'ligi Oftas	8	2	2	4	7	9	8
Bursaspor	8	1	4	3	8	9	7
Kasimpasa	8	2	1	5	6	11	7
Konyaspor	8	1	4	3	8	15	7
Rizespor	8	2	1	5	7	18	7
Ankaraspor	8	0	3	5	5	12	3

UKRAINE

Sep 21: Naftovyk 2 Metalurh Donetsk 2.
Sep 22: Zorya 2 FC Kharkiv 1; Zakarpattya 2 Kryvbas 3; Vorskla 0 Karpaty 0; Tavriya 1 Dynamo 4.
Sep 23: Metalist 2 Metalurh Zaporizhya 1; Arsenal 1 Chornomorets 2; Shakhtar 4 Dnipro 1.
Sep 28: Metalurh Donetsk 1 Zorya 0.
Sep 29: Dynamo 0 Naftovyk 1; Metalurh Zaporizhya 1 Shakhtar 3; Kryvbas 3 Vorskla 0; FC Kharkiv 0 Zakarpattya 2.
Sep 30: Dnipro 1 Arsenal 3; Chornomorets 2 Tavriya 0; Karpaty 0 Metalist 2.
Oct 5: Vorskla 1 FC Kharkiv 1.
Oct 6: Arsenal 2 Metalurh Zaporizhya 1; Zorya 1 Dynamo 2; Zakarpattya 1 Metalurh Donetsk 1; Tavriya 1 Naftovyk 0.
Oct 7: Shakhtar 3 Karpaty 0; Metalist 3 Kryvbas 2; Chornomorets 1 Dnipro 2.

UKRAINE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	12	11	1	0	31	7	34
Dnipro	12	8	1	3	22	13	25
Dynamo	12	7	3	2	23	13	24
Metalist	12	7	2	3	20	14	23
Chornomorets	12	5	2	5	9	10	17
Tavriya	12	5	2	5	13	19	17
Metalurh D	12	3	6	3	16	15	15
Metalurh Z	12	4	3	5	11	13	15
Arsenal	12	4	2	6	23	20	14
Vorskla	12	2	7	3	9	12	13
Kryvbas	12	4	1	7	16	20	13
FC Kharkiv	12	3	4	5	8	12	13
Zorya	12	4	1	7	12	18	13
Zakarpattya	12	3	4	5	9	16	13
Karpaty	12	3	3	6	11	17	12
Naftovyk	12	1	2	9	5	19	5

SOUTH AMERICA

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Last 16

Boca Juniors (Arg) v Sao Paulo (Bra)
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Sao Paulo on away goals)
Botafogo (Bra) v River Plate (Arg)
1-0, 2-4 (agg 3-4)
DC United (USA) v Guadalajara (Mex)
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Guadalajara on away goals)
Defensor (Uru) v El Nacional (Ecu)
3-0, 0-2 (agg 3-2)
Goias (Bra) v Arsenal (Arg)
2-3, 1-1 (agg 3-4)
Lanus (Arg) v Vasco da Gama (Bra)
2-0, 0-3 (agg 2-3)
Millonarios (Col) v Colo Colo (Chl)
1-1, 1-1 (agg 2-2; Millonarios 7-6 on pens)
Pachuca (Mex) v America (Mex)
1-4, 2-0 (agg 3-4)

ARGENTINA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, September 21
Huracan 2 (Mendoza 50, Nieto 73)
Colon Santa Fe 2 (Romero 5, Gandin pen 78)

Rosario Central 1 (Vizcarra 86)
San Lorenzo 3 (Silvera 23, Mendez 77, Hirsig 90)

Saturday, September 22
Argentinos Juniors 4 (Hauche 25, Pereira 43, 50, 64)
Newell's Old Boys 0

Gimnasia La Plata 0
Banfield 1 (Cvitanich 28)

Independiente 3 (Montenegro 14, Denis 18, 65)
Olimpo 0

San Martin 3 (Brusco pen 70, Tonelotto 90, Herrera 90)
Velez Sarsfield 2 (Silva 65, Balvorin pen 76)

Sunday, September 23
Arsenal 0
Racing Club 1 (Sava 59)

Boca Juniors 2 (Boselli 68, Paletta 85)
Gimnasia Jujuy 2 (Miranda 10, Berza 90)

Lanus 1 (Jimenez 90)
Estudiantes 0

Tigre 4 (Martinez 10, Gimenez 60, Ayala 62, 84)
River Plate 1 (Ruben 66)

Friday, September 28
Estudiantes 2 (Alayes 82, Maggiolo 89)
Tigre 2 (Ayala 21, Blengio 26)

Olimpo 3 (Lujambio 27, Martinez 59, Olivi pen 77)
Huracan 1 (Mendoza 84)

Saturday, September 29
Banfield 2 (Barrales 45, Luchetti pen 77)
Independiente 0

Colon Santa Fe 1 (Gandin pen 44)
San Martin 1 (Brusco 69)

Gimnasia Jujuy 4 (Berza 19, Miranda 47, Carranza 69, Quinteros 75)
Gimnasia La Plata 0

Velez Sarsfield 0
Arsenal 0

Sunday, September 30
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Salcedo 12)
Boca Juniors 0

Racing Club 1 (Romagnoli 12)
Lanus 1 (Sand 70)

River Plate 3 (Rios 62, Buonanotte 74, Falcao Garcia 90)
Rosario Central 3 (Garcia 40, Diaz 48, Raldes 90)

San Lorenzo 2 (Silvera 5, Ferreyra pen 76)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Ortigoza pen 12)

Tuesday, October 2
Colon Santa Fe 3 (Gandin 3, Merlo 42, Quinteros 68)
Olimpo 0

Huracan 1 (Coyette 67)
Banfield 0

Independiente 3 (Denis 53, pen 90, Matheu 84)
Gimnasia Jujuy 0

Wednesday, October 3
Argentinos Juniors 4 (Hauche 3, Delorte 9, Niell 87, Battion 90)
River Plate 1 (Ruben 48)

Boca Juniors 2 (Palermo 36, Mendez og 57)
San Lorenzo 0

Lanus 2 (Sand 4, pen 16)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Coria 50)

Rosario Central 2 (Vizcarra 74, 77)
Estudiantes 2 (Moreno y Fabianesi pen 14, Luguercio 90)

San Martin 1 (Roth 89)
Arsenal 1 (San Martin 13)

Tigre 3 (Ayala 60, Lazzaro 61, Suarez 89)
Racing Club 2 (Sava 34, Sosa 73)

Friday, October 5
Banfield 3 (Barrales 14, 59, 70)
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Rivarola 79)

Gimnasia Jujuy 2 (Goltz og 9, Miranda 29)
Huracan 0

Saturday, October 6
Olimpo 2 (Lujambio 84, Olivi 87)
San Martin 1 (Tonelotto 19)

Racing Club 2 (Sava 33, 78)
Rosario Central 2 (Papa 51, Vizcarra 58)

San Lorenzo 1 (Ortiz 30)
Gimnasia La Plata 1 (Piatti 86)

Velez Sarsfield 1 (Zapata 45)
Tigre 1 (Ereros 20)

Sunday, October 7
Arsenal 0
Lanus 1 (Sand 8)

Estudiantes 3 (Veron 13, pen 90, Maggiolo 73)
Argentinos Juniors 0

Newell's Old Boys 2 (Steinert 9, Salcedo 40)
Independiente 1 (Montenegro 13)

River Plate 2 (Falcao Garcia 23, Ortega pen 33)
Boca Juniors 0

Friday, October 12
Gimnasia La Plata 2 (Escobar 58, Piatti 78)
Colon Santa Fe 0

ARGENTINA – OPENING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Independiente	13	8	1	4	27	14	25
Lanus	13	7	3	3	21	18	24
Boca Juniors	13	7	2	4	21	12	23
Tigre	13	6	4	3	18	15	22
Banfield	13	7	0	6	16	18	21
Argentinos Jnrs	13	6	2	5	22	16	20
River Plate	13	5	4	4	27	22	19
Racing Club	13	5	3	5	19	16	18
San Lorenzo	13	5	3	5	21	23	18
Colon Santa Fe	13	5	2	6	16	17	17
Velez Sarsfield	13	5	2	6	15	17	17
Newell's OB	12	5	2	5	11	15	17
Estudiantes	13	4	4	5	18	16	16
Gimnasia J	13	4	4	5	17	19	16
Arsenal	13	4	4	5	12	14	16
Huracan	13	4	4	5	12	17	16
Gimnasia LP	12	4	3	5	10	13	15
San Martin	13	4	3	6	13	17	15
Olimpo	13	3	3	7	9	20	12
Rosario Central	13	1	7	5	15	21	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS
15 German Denis (Independiente)
10 Jose Sand (Lanus)
8 Facundo Sava (Racing Club)

BOLIVIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sep 20: The Strongest 4 Universitario 1; Jorge Wilstermann 2 Real Mamore 1.
Sep 23: Aurora 1 Jorge Wilstermann 1; Bolivar 2 The Strongest 3; Real Potosi 2 Universitario 1; San Jose 1 La Paz 1; Real Mamore 1 Destroyers 0.
Sep 24: Oriente 1 Blooming 2.
Sep 26: Bolivar 0 Real Potosi 0.
Sep 27: Aurora 2 Destroyers 2; San Jose 1 The Strongest 0; Universitario 1 Blooming 0; Oriente 2 Jorge Wilstermann 1.
Sep 28: Real Mamore 1 La Paz 0.
Sep 30: Aurora 2 Universitario 1; Blooming 1 San Jose 1; Bolivar 2 Real Mamore 2; Destroyers 4 The Strongest 1; La Paz 2 Oriente 1; Real Potosi 2 Jorge Wilstermann 4.

BOLIVIA – CLOSING – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
The Strongest	12	6	3	3	23	14	21
Blooming	12	6	3	3	14	10	21
San Jose	12	4	5	3	18	17	17
Universitario	12	4	3	5	18	18	15
Aurora	12	3	5	4	13	17	14
Destroyers	12	3	2	7	17	26	11

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
La Paz	12	7	2	3	12	6	23
J Wilstermann	12	5	3	4	19	17	18
Real Mamore	12	5	2	5	15	13	17
Real Potosi	12	4	4	4	17	14	16
Bolivar	12	4	2	6	16	20	14
Oriente	12	4	0	8	10	20	12

BRAZIL

Sep 22: Goias 1 America 1; Gremio 1 Santos 0; Sao Paulo 2 Figueirense 0.
Sep 23: Atletico Mineiro 2 Internacional 2; Juventude 2 Flamengo 2; Nautico 2 Sport Recife 0; Palmeiras 1 Corinthians 0; Atletico Paranaense 2 Parana 1; Botafogo 0 Fluminense 2; Vasco da Gama 0 Cruzeiro 2.
Sep 29: Corinthians 1 Sport Recife 2; Flamengo 1 Atletico Mineiro 0; Nautico 5 Atletico Paranaense 0.
Sep 30: America 0 Palmeiras 0; Botafogo 0 Goias 3; Cruzeiro 1 Figueirense 2; Internacional 1 Sao Paulo 2; Juventude 1 Gremio 2; Parana 3 Fluminense 1; Santos 1 Vasco da Gama 0.
Oct 3: Atletico Paranaense 2 Botafogo 0; Vasco da Gama 0 Juventude 1; Cruzeiro 0 Santos 1; Fluminense 1 Corinthians 1; Gremio 2 Atletico Mineiro 2; Palmeiras 2 Nautico 1; Sport Recife 4 Goias 0.
Oct 4: America 3 Parana 2; Flamengo 1 Sao Paulo 0; Figueirense 0 Internacional 0.

Oct 6: Botafogo 1 Santos 2; Nautico 4 Juventude 1; Palmeiras 2 Gremio 0.
Oct 7: Atletico Mineiro 3 Sport Recife 1; Atletico Paranaense 1 Vasco da Gama 0; Figueirense 4 Parana 0; Flamengo 0 Fluminense 2; Goias 0 Cruzeiro 0; Internacional 2 America 0; Sao Paulo 0 Corinthians 1.
Oct 12: Cruzeiro 2 Nautico 2; Juventude 0 Atletico Paranaense 0; Sport Recife 0 Figueirense 0.
Oct 13: America 0 Atletico Mineiro 1; Corinthians 1 Internacional 1; Fluminense 1 Sao Paulo 1; Gremio 2 Goias 1; Parana 0 Flamengo 1; Santos 1 Palmeiras 1.
Oct 14: Vasco da Gama 2 Botafogo 1.
Oct 18: Vasco da Gama 1 Flamengo 2.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	31	19	7	5	45	12	64
Cruzeiro	31	16	5	10	66	49	53
Santos	31	16	4	11	44	36	52
Gremio	31	15	6	10	35	32	51
Palmeiras	31	14	9	8	39	36	51
Fluminense	31	12	12	7	42	27	48
Flamengo	31	12	10	9	46	44	46
Vasco	31	12	7	12	45	37	43
Sport Recife	31	12	7	12	47	47	43
Figueirense	31	11	9	11	47	47	42
Botafogo	31	11	9	11	47	49	42
At Paranaense	31	11	9	11	42	44	42
Internacional	31	11	8	12	40	39	41
At Mineiro	31	11	7	13	48	45	40
Nautico	31	11	7	13	55	53	40
Goias	31	11	5	15	38	46	38
Corinthians	31	9	11	11	33	41	38
Parana	31	9	7	15	36	52	34
Juventude	31	8	7	16	34	53	31
America	31	4	4	23	23	63	16

CHILE

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sep 21: Univ Catolica 2 Cobresal 0.
Sep 22: Audax Italiano 2 Palestino 1; Cobreloa 1 Santiago Wanderers 0; Colo Colo 2 Dep La Serena 0; Coquimbo Unido 0 Lota Schwager 1; Everton 1 Puerto Montt 0; O'Higgins 1 Dep Concepcion 1; Union Espanola 0 Antofagasta 0; Univ de Concepcion 2 Nublense 2.
Sep 23: Huachipato 2 Univ de Chile 3.
Sep 25: Antofagasta 0 Univ Catolica 0; Palestino 1 O'Higgins 0; Santiago Wanderers 0 Univ de Concepcion 3.
Sep 26: Cobresal 3 Everton 1; Dep Concepcion 2 Audax Italiano 1; Dep Melipilla 1 Univ de Chile 3; Dep La Serena 4 Huachipato 1; Lota Schwager 1 Union Espanola 1; Nublense 3 Cobreloa 2; Puerto Montt 0 Coquimbo Unido 1.
Sep 29: Dep Concepcion 1 Antofagasta 1; Dep La Serena 1 Palestino 0; O'Higgins 2 Coquimbo Unido 1; Puerto Montt 0 Colo Colo 2; Union Espanola 0 Univ de Concepcion 2.
Sep 30: Everton 4 Lota Schwager 2; Huachipato 0 Univ Catolica 0; Audax Italiano 5 Nublense 0; Cobreloa 5 Dep Melipilla 1; Univ de Chile 2 Santiago Wanderers 0.
Oct 3: Cobresal 5 Dep Concepcion 0; Colo Colo 2 Everton 2; Coquimbo Unido 2 Cobreloa 1; Lota Schwager 0 Puerto Montt 0; Nublense 1 Univ de Chile 2; Palestino 1 Union Espanola 2; Univ Catolica 1 Audax Italiano 2; Univ de Concepcion 1 O'Higgins 2.
Oct 4: Dep Melipilla 3 Dep La Serena 3.
Oct 6: Union Espanola 1 Dep Concepcion 5; Univ de Chile 3 Palestino 1.
Oct 7: Audax Italiano 7 Santiago Wanderers 1; Cobreloa 3 Univ Catolica 1; Everton 3 Coquimbo Unido 1; Huachipato 2 Lota Schwager 2; Dep La Serena 0 Antofagasta 2; O'Higgins 2 Colo Colo 1; Puerto Montt 1 Cobresal 0; Univ de Concepcion 1 Dep Melipilla 1.
Oct 15: Nublense 1 O'Higgins 1.

CHILE – CLOSING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	13	7	4	2	26	14	25
Cobresal	13	7	3	3	23	14	24
Dep La Serena	13	5	3	5	17	19	18
Puerto Montt	13	3	2	8	9	16	11
S Wanderers	13	3	2	8	9	26	11

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Concepcion	13	6	6	1	21	11	24
Univ Catolica	13	6	3	4	19	13	21
D Concepcion	13	5	3	5	23	29	18
U Espanola	14	3	4	7	16	23	13
Dep Melipilla	13	3	4	6	17	25	13

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Audax Italiano	13	10	2	1	32	12	32
Univ de Chile	13	8	4	1	26	13	28
Cobreloa	13	6	3	4	24	18	21
Everton	14	3	4	7	16	21	13
Palestino	13	3	3	7	16	19	12

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
O'Higgins	14	8	5	1	22	14	29
Antofagasta	13	4	5	4	15	11	17
Nublense	14	4	4	6	19	29	16
Huachipato	13	4	3	6	20	24	15
Coquimbo U	14	3	1	10	13	25	10
L Schwager	13	1	6	6	12	19	9

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sep 21: Chico 1 Dep Cali 1.
Sep 22: Tolima 0 Millonarios 0; La Equidad 0 Indep Medellin 1.
Sep 23: America 2 Once Caldas 2; Bucaramanga 1 Cucuta 2; At Junior 1 Dep Pasto 0; At Nacional 2 Quindio 1; Pereira 0 At Huila 0; Indep Santa Fe 1 Real Cartagena 1.
Sep 28: Tolima 3 Pereira 0.
Sep 29: Quindio 0 America 2; Indep Medellin 2 Indep Santa Fe 0.
Sep 30: Cucuta 5 Chico 1; Dep Cali 0 La Equidad 1; Dep Pasto 0 At Nacional 1; Millonarios 2 At Junior 0; Once Caldas 1 Bucaramanga 0; Real Cartagena 1 At Huila 2.
Oct 3: Dep Pasto 2 Tolima 0.
Oct 5: Pereira 1 Real Cartagena 1.
Oct 6: At Huila 0 Indep Medellin 3; America 1 Dep Pasto 0.
Oct 7: Bucaramanga 3 Quindio 2; At Junior 1 Tolima 2; At Nacional 3 Millonarios 0; Chico 1 Once Caldas 0; Indep Santa Fe 0 Dep Cali 0; La Equidad 1 Cucuta 0.

COLOMBIA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Nacional	12	8	3	1	21	8	27
La Equidad	12	8	3	1	16	8	27
Tolima	12	7	2	3	18	11	23
Cucuta	12	7	1	4	19	12	22
America	12	6	3	3	15	11	21
Chico	12	5	4	3	12	13	19
Indep Medellin	12	6	0	6	16	17	18
Dep Pasto	12	5	3	4	17	12	18
Once Caldas	12	5	3	4	19	17	18
At Junior	12	5	0	7	15	18	15
Quindio	12	4	2	6	18	17	14
Millonarios	12	4	2	6	11	19	14
At Huila	12	3	4	5	10	18	13
Real Cartagena	12	3	3	6	12	16	12
Indep Santa Fe	12	2	4	6	12	16	10
Dep Cali	12	1	7	4	12	15	10
Pereira	12	1	6	5	10	19	9
Bucaramanga	12	2	2	8	15	21	8

ECUADOR

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sep 22: Dep Azogues 1 Dep Cuenca 0; Imbabura 1 Olmedo 1; Macara 0 Dep Quito 1.
Sep 23: Barcelona 0 LDU Quito 3; El Nacional 2 Emelec 1.
Sep 25: Dep Cuenca 0 Macara 1.
Sep 26: Dep Quito 4 Barcelona 0; El Nacional 0 LDU Quito 2; Emelec 2 Imbabura 2; Olmedo 1 Dep Azogues 0.
Sep 29: Dep Azogues 1 Emelec 0; Barcelona 2 Dep Cuenca 1; Imbabura 2 El Nacional 2; LDU Quito 2 Dep Quito 0; Macara 1 Olmedo 1.
Oct 2: El Nacional 2 Dep Azogues 0.
Oct 3: Dep Cuenca 0 LDU Quito 0; Emelec 2 Dep Quito 1; Imbabura 1 Macara 4; Olmedo 2 Barcelona 0.
Oct 7: Dep Azogues 2 Imbabura 3; Barcelona 1 El Nacional 2; Dep Quito 4 Dep Cuenca 0; LDU Quito 0 Olmedo 0; Macara 2 Emelec 0.

ECUADOR – CLOSING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU Quito	18	10	3	5	28	11	33
Dep Quito	18	9	2	7	22	15	29
Emelec	18	9	2	7	24	20	29
El Nacional	18	8	5	5	23	19	29
Dep Azogues	18	7	3	8	20	24	24
Barcelona	18	7	3	8	19	25	24
Olmedo	18	5	7	6	12	15	22
Macara	18	5	6	7	21	25	21
Cuenca	18	5	4	9	22	25	19
Imbabura	18	4	7	7	18	30	19

PARAGUAY

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sep 22: Sol de America 1 Tacuary 1; Cerro Porteno 1 Olimpia 2.
Sep 23: Nacional 2 Sportivo Luqueno 1; 2 de Mayo 0 12 de Octubre 1; Sportivo Trinidense 1 3 de Febrero 0; Libertad 2 Guarani 1.
Sep 26: Cerro Porteno 5 Tacuary 1.
Sep 29: 3 de Febrero 1 Olimpia 1; Guarani 2 Nacional 1.
Sep 30: 12 de Octubre 0 Sportivo Trinidense 1; Cerro Porteno 2 Sol de America 1; Sportivo Luqueno 1 2 de Mayo 1; Tacuary 1 Libertad 1.
Oct 5: Olimpia 1 Sol de America 2.
Oct 6: Guarani 4 2 de Mayo 0; Tacuary 2 Nacional 2.
Oct 7: 12 de Octubre 2 3 de Febrero 0; Cerro Porteno 0 Libertad 0; Sportivo Luqueno 1 Sportivo Trinidense 0.
Oct 12: 3 de Febrero 0 Sol de America 1; Nacional 1 Cerro Porteno 3; 2 de Mayo 0 Tacuary 0.
Oct 14: 12 de Octubre 2 Sportivo Luqueno 1; Sportivo Trinidense 2 Guarani 1; Libertad 0 Olimpia 1.

PARAGUAY – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad	13	9	3	1	19	10	30
Cerro Porteno	13	9	2	2	28	10	29
Olimpia	13	7	4	2	15	9	25
Sol de America	13	5	5	3	17	14	20
12 de Octubre	13	5	2	6	12	13	17
Trinidense	13	4	5	4	9	10	17
Nacional	13	4	4	5	20	19	16
Tacuary	13	4	4	5	15	17	16
Guarani	13	4	2	7	13	15	14
3 de Febrero	13	3	3	7	13	25	12
2 de Mayo	13	2	4	7	9	18	10
Luqueno	13	2	2	9	11	21	8

PERU

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sep 19: Total Clean 1 Cienciano 0; Universidad SMP 0 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Universitario 0 Alianza Atletico 0.
Sep 20: Sport Boys 1 Melgar 1; Sporting Cristal 1 Alianza Lima 2.
Sep 22: Total Clean 0 Universitario 1.
Sep 23: Alianza Lima 0 Melgar 0; Coronel Bolognesi 2 Sport Ancash 0; Cienciano 4 Dep Municipal 0; Universidad SMP 1 Sport Boys 1; Sporting Cristal 1 Alianza Atletico 0.
Sep 26: Alianza Atletico 3 Cienciano 0; Dep Municipal 0 Alianza Lima 1; Melgar 0 Coronel Bolognesi 1; Sport Ancash 1 Total Clean 0; Universitario 0 Universidad SMP 0.
Sep 27: Sport Boys 3 Sporting Cristal 0.
Sep 29: Dep Municipal 1 Coronel Bolognesi 2; Sport Ancash 1 Universidad SMP 0.
Sep 30: Alianza Atletico 1 Melgar 0; Sport Boys 1 Alianza Lima 2; Total Clean 1 Sporting Cristal 1; Universitario 2 Cienciano 1.
Oct 6: Alianza Lima 2 Alianza Atletico 1; Sporting Cristal 2 Sport Ancash 0.
Oct 7: Coronel Bolognesi 0 Universitario 0; Cienciano 3 Sport Boys 0; Melgar 1 Dep Municipal 0; Universidad SMP 3 Total Clean 0.

PERU – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
C Bolognesi	13	7	4	2	15	5	25
Sport Ancash	13	6	3	4	18	15	21
Universitario	12	5	5	2	14	11	20
Cienciano	13	6	1	6	19	18	19
Al Lima	12	5	4	3	12	14	19
Al Atletico	13	4	5	4	13	13	17
Dep Municipal	13	5	2	6	12	17	17
Univ SMP	13	4	3	6	17	14	15
Sport Boys	13	3	6	4	17	17	15
Melgar	13	3	6	4	9	9	15
S Cristal	13	3	4	6	12	18	13
Total Clean	13	3	3	7	11	18	12

URUGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sep 22: Nacional 0 Juventud 0; Progreso 0 Bella Vista 2; Danubio 3 Central Espanol 1.
Sep 23: Cerro 4 Wanderers 3; Liverpool 0 Defensor 0; Penarol 1 Miramar Misiones 0; Rampla Juniors 0 Fenix 0; Tacuarembo 2 River Plate 3.
Sep 26: Juventud 0 Cerro 0.
Sep 29: Defensor 4 Cerro 0; Fenix 0 Penarol 0; Juventud 2 Tacuarembo 0.
Sep 30: Bella Vista 3 Liverpool 5; Central Espanol 1 Nacional 1; Miramar Misiones 0 Rampla Juniors 2; River Plate 6 Progreso 0; Wanderers 3 Danubio 1.
Oct 6: Bella Vista 1 Wanderers 2.
Oct 7: Cerro 0 Tacuarembo 2; Juventud 3 Central Espanol 1; Liverpool 1 Progreso 2; Rampla Juniors 1 Nacional 0; River Plate 2 Miramar Misiones 2.
Oct 14: Defensor 3 Fenix 0.

URUGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rampla Jnrs	8	6	1	1	12	5	19
Defensor	8	5	2	1	13	2	17
River Plate	8	4	2	2	22	15	14
Danubio	7	4	2	1	11	5	14
Juventud	8	3	4	1	8	4	13
Wanderers	8	4	1	3	13	11	13
Penarol	7	3	2	2	12	10	11
Fenix	8	2	5	1	8	6	11
Tacuarembo	8	3	2	3	8	9	11
Nacional	8	2	4	2	7	6	10
Cerro	8	2	4	2	8	10	10
Liverpool	8	2	2	4	12	12	8
M Misiones	8	2	1	5	4	10	7
Bella Vista	8	1	2	5	11	17	5
C Espanol	8	1	2	5	7	16	5
Progreso	8	1	0	7	3	21	3

VENEZUELA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sep 23: Mineros 1 Anzoategui 0; Aragua 5 Estudiantes 2; El Vigia 0 Guaros 1; Caracas 0 Llaneros 0; Dep Tachira 2 Trujillanos 0; Portuguesa 1 Dep Italia 0; UA Maracaibo 3 Monagas 3; Union Lara 0 Zamora 0; Estrella Roja 3 Carabobo 2.
Sep 30: Anzoategui 5 Aragua 1; Carabobo 0 Portuguesa 1; Dep Italia 2 Monagas 3; Dep Tachira 0 Caracas 1; Estudiantes 2 Union Lara 2; Guaros 3 Estrella Roja 1; Llaneros 3 Mineros 2; Trujillanos 3 El Vigia 2; Zamora 4 UA Maracaibo 0.
Oct 7: Mineros 1 Caracas 3; Aragua 3 Llaneros 1; El Vigia 1 Dep Tachira 0; Dep Italia 1 Zamora 0; Monagas 4 Carabobo 0; Portuguesa 1 Guaros 0; UA Maracaibo 4 Estudiantes 2; Union Lara 0 Anzoategui 3; Estrella Roja 3 Trujillanos 2.

VENEZUELA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Caracas	9	6	3	0	15	6	21
Anzoategui	9	5	1	3	18	8	16
UA Maracaibo	9	4	4	1	16	15	16
Guaros	9	4	2	3	15	13	14
Trujillanos	9	4	2	3	14	14	14
Portuguesa	8	4	1	3	7	7	13
Monagas	9	3	3	3	19	14	12
Llaneros	9	3	3	3	11	11	12
Aragua	9	3	3	3	20	21	12
El Vigia	9	4	0	5	9	12	12
Dep Tachira	8	3	2	3	11	6	11
Estrella Roja	9	3	2	4	14	20	11
Zamora	9	2	4	3	8	7	10
Dep Italia	9	2	4	3	8	9	10
Mineros	9	2	4	3	11	13	10
Estudiantes	9	2	3	4	13	19	9
Union Lara	9	1	4	4	13	19	7
Carabobo	9	2	1	6	6	14	7

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Sep 21: Veracruz 3 Pachuca 0.
Sep 22: Cruz Azul 2 Atlante 2; San Luis 2 America 1; Morelia 0 Pumas UNAM 3; Necaxa 1 Tecos UAG 1; Tigres 1 Monterrey 0; Atlas 0 Jaguares 1.
Sep 23: Toluca 1 Guadalajara 0; Santos 4 Puebla 1.
Sep 25: Tecos UAG 3 Monterrey 0.
Sep 28: Tecos UAG 3 Morelia 2.
Sep 29: Jaguares 2 Santos 2; Monterrey 2 San Luis 3; Guadalajara 3 Veracruz 1; Pachuca 1 Necaxa 1; Atlante 2 Toluca 0.
Sep 30: Pumas UNAM 3 Atlas 2; America 2 Cruz Azul 2; Puebla 3 Tigres 0.
Oct 5: Veracruz 0 Atlante 2.
Oct 6: Cruz Azul 2 Monterrey 1; Necaxa 1 Morelia 1; San Luis 0 Puebla 3; Pachuca 1 Guadalajara 2; Tigres 1 Jaguares 1; Atlas 3 Tecos UAG 2.
Oct 7: Toluca 3 America 1; Santos 3 Pumas UNAM 2.
Oct 10: Monterrey 1 Toluca 1.
Oct 12: Tecos UAG 3 Santos 1.
Oct 13: Jaguares 2 San Luis 2; Guadalajara 5 Necaxa 1; Morelia 0 Atlas 2; Atlante 1 Pachuca 2.
Oct 14: Pumas UNAM 3 Tigres 0; America 0 Veracruz 0; Puebla 1 Cruz Azul 1.

MEXICO – OPENING – GROUP 1	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toluca	12	7	2	3	20	14	23
Pumas UNAM	12	5	4	3	20	13	19
Pachuca	12	6	1	5	21	17	19
Puebla	12	4	3	5	16	15	15
Tecos UAG	12	4	2	6	16	24	14
Jaguares	12	2	7	3	14	19	13

GROUP 2	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	12	8	3	1	27	14	27
Atlante	12	7	4	1	24	14	25
America	12	3	5	4	19	18	14
Veracruz	12	3	2	7	13	21	11
Monterrey	12	2	4	6	13	18	10
Atlas	12	2	2	8	14	20	8

GROUP 3	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guadalajara	12	6	3	3	17	9	21
Cruz Azul	12	5	3	4	20	16	18
San Luis	12	5	3	4	20	22	18
Morelia	12	4	4	4	14	17	16
Necaxa	12	3	5	4	16	24	14
Tigres	12	2	3	7	9	18	9

UNITED STATES

Sep 20: FC Dallas 1 Chicago Fire 1.
Sep 22: Chivas USA 2 Kansas City Wizards 1; Real Salt Lake 1 Colorado Rapids 0; New York Red Bulls 2 New England Revolution 2; Toronto FC 1 Columbus Crew 2.
Sep 23: Los Angeles Galaxy 2 FC Dallas 1; Chicago Fire 1 DC United 1.
Sep 27: Kansas City Wizards 0 Los Angeles Galaxy 1.
Sep 29: DC United 4 Toronto FC 1; New York Red Bulls 2 Real Salt Lake 2; New England Revolution 1 Colorado Rapids 0; Chivas USA 1 Chicago Fire 1.
Sep 30: Columbus Crew 1 Los Angeles Galaxy 2; FC Dallas 0 Houston Dynamo 3.
Oct 4: Toronto FC 2 New York Red Bulls 1.
Oct 5: Kansas City Wizards 1 DC United 1.
Oct 6: Real Salt Lake 2 Chivas USA 3; Chicago Fire 2 New England Revolution 1; Columbus Crew 1 FC Dallas 3.
Oct 7: Colorado Rapids 1 Toronto FC 0; Houston Dynamo 1 Los Angeles Galaxy 2.
Oct 11: FC Dallas 0 Chivas USA 0.
Oct 13: Los Angeles Galaxy 2 Toronto FC 1; New York Red Bulls 2 Kansas City Wizards 1; New England Revolution 2 Columbus Crew 3; DC United 0 Chicago Fire 0.
Oct 14: Chivas USA 1 Colorado Rapids 2.
Oct 15: Real Salt Lake 0 Houston Dynamo 1;
Oct 18: Los Angeles Galaxy 1 New York Red Bulls 1.

UNITED STATES – EASTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DC United	29	16	7	6	54	31	55
New England	29	14	7	8	49	41	49
New York	30	12	7	11	47	45	43
Kansas City	29	10	7	12	43	45	37
Chicago Fire	29	9	10	10	30	36	37
Columbus	29	8	10	11	36	42	34
Toronto FC	29	6	6	17	23	47	24

WESTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chivas USA	29	15	7	7	46	28	52
Houston	29	15	6	8	43	23	51
FC Dallas	29	13	5	11	37	42	44
Colorado	29	9	8	12	29	33	35
LA Galaxy	29	9	7	13	38	47	34
Real Salt Lake	29	5	9	15	30	45	24

LEADING GOALSCORERS

20 Luciano Emilio (DC United)
19 Juan Pablo Angel (New York Red Bulls)
15 Eddie Johnson (Kansas City Wizards)
15 Taylor Twellman (New England Revolution)

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Semi-finals, 1st legs

Sep 23
Al Hilal (Sud) 2 (Godwin 61, Kelechi 66)
Etoile Sahel (Tun) 1 (Radhouane 39)
HT: 0-1

Sep 23
Al Ittihad (Lby) 0
Al Ahly (Egy) 0

Semi-finals, 2nd legs

Oct 6
Etoile Sahel 3 (Chermiti 16, 62, Ben Frej 52)
Al Hilal 1 (Godwin 55)
HT: 1-0
Etoile Sahel 4-3 on agg

Oct 7
Al Ahly 1 (Shabaan og 20)
Al Ittihad 0
HT: 1-0
Al Ahly 1-0 on agg

CONFEDERATION CUP

Group A

Sep 22: CS Sfaxien (Tun) 3 Astres (Cam) 0.
Sep 23: TP Mazembe (DRC) 3 Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) 1.
Oct 6: Astres 1 TP Mazembe 2; Mamelodi Sundowns 1 CS Sfaxien 2.

GROUP A – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CS Sfaxien	6	4	1	1	13	4	13
TP Mazembe	6	4	0	2	11	9	12
M Sundowns	6	2	0	4	7	13	6
Astres	6	1	1	4	5	10	4

Group B

Sep 22: Kwara United (Nig) 0 Dolphin (Nig) 0.
Sep 23: Al Merreikh (Sud) 1 Ismaili (Egy) 0.
Oct 7: Dolphin 3 Al Merreikh 0; Ismaili 1 Kwara United 0.

GROUP B – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Merreikh	6	3	1	2	13	8	10
Dolphin	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
Ismaili	6	2	2	2	4	5	8
Kwara United	6	1	2	3	4	9	5

Group winners qualified for Final

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals

1st legs - September 19; 2nd legs - September 26
Al Wahda (UAE) v Al Hilal (Sau)
0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1; Al Wahda on away goals)
Sepahan (Irn) v Kawasaki Frontale (Jap)
0-0, 0-0 (aet) (agg 0-0; Sepahan 5-4 on pens)
Songnam Ilhwa (SKo) v Al Karama (Syr)
2-1, 2-0 (agg 4-1)
Urawa Reds (Jap) v Chonbuk Motors (SKo)
2-1, 2-0 (agg 4-1)

AFC CUP

Quarter-finals

1st legs - September 18; 2nd legs - September 25
Mahindra United (Ind) v Al Nijmeh (Leb)
1-2, 3-3 (agg 4-5)
Shabab Al Ordun (Jor) v Armed Forces (Sin)
5-0, 0-3 (agg 5-3)
Sun Hei (HK) v Al Wihdat (Jor)
0-1, 1-3 (agg 1-4)
Tampines Rovers (Sin) v Al Faisaly (Jor)
1-2, 2-5 (agg 3-7)

CHINA

Sep 21: Tianjin 0 Changchun 1; Wuhan 1 Dalian 0.
Sep 22: Shenzhen 1 Xiamen 1; Shanghai 1 Liaoning 1; Xian 0 Shandong 0.
Sep 23: Henan 0 Zhejiang 1; Beijing 3 Qingdao 0.
Sep 29: Dalian 1 Shenzhen 1; Xian 4 Tianjin 2; Zhejiang 1 Wuhan 3; Shenyang 0 Beijing 2; Qingdao 3 Shanghai 0.
Sep 30: Liaoning 0 Henan 0; Shandong 4 Xiamen 0.
Oct 3: Shenzhen 1 Zhejiang 0.
Oct 4: Tianjin 1 Shandong 0; Xiamen 2 Dalian 2; Shanghai 2 Shenyang 0; Henan 3 Qingdao 1; Wuhan 2 Liaoning 0; Beijing 0 Changchun 1.
Oct 13: Xiamen 1 Xian 0.

CHINA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Changchun	24	14	6	4	36	19	48
Beijing	25	13	8	4	42	19	47
Shandong	25	14	4	7	51	26	46
Shanghai	25	12	7	6	32	26	43
Tianjin	25	12	6	7	31	20	42
Dalian	24	10	9	5	30	25	39
Wuhan	24	10	6	8	27	25	36
Qingdao	24	8	5	11	29	37	29
Liaoning	24	7	6	11	20	33	27
Shenyang	24	6	8	10	13	23	26
Xian	24	4	11	9	22	26	23
Shenzhen	24	5	8	11	17	33	23
Henan	24	4	10	10	16	24	22
Zhejiang	24	5	7	12	21	32	22
Xiamen	24	4	7	13	20	39	19

JAPAN

Sep 22: Oita Trinita 2 Yokohama FC 0; Omiya Ardija 0 JEF United 1; Vissel Kobe 5 Nagoya Grampus Eight 0; Ventforet Kofu 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; Kashima Antlers 3 Albirex Niigata 1; Yokohama F Marinos 0 Urawa Reds 1.
Sep 23: FC Tokyo 2 Shimizu S-Pulse 0; Jubilo Iwata 1 Gamba Osaka 1; Kashiwa Reysol 4 Kawasaki Frontale 0.
Sep 29: Nagoya Grampus Eight 2 Kashiwa Reysol 0; Jubilo Iwata 3 Yokohama FC 0; Yokohama F Marinos 0 Omiya Ardija 2; Vissel Kobe 1 Shimizu S-Pulse 0; Gamba Osaka 1 Oita Trinita 0.
Sep 30: Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0 Kashima Antlers 1; Kawasaki Frontale 1 Ventforet Kofu 1; Urawa Reds 1 Albirex Niigata 0; JEF United 3 FC Tokyo 2.
Oct 6: Kashima Antlers 3 Vissel Kobe 2; FC Tokyo 2 Yokohama F Marinos 1; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0 Jubilo Iwata 1; Albirex Niigata 1 Omiya Ardija 0; Ventforet Kofu 0 JEF United 1; Kashiwa Reysol 1 Gamba Osaka 2; Shimizu S-Pulse 3 Nagoya Grampus Eight 0.
Oct 7: Yokohama FC 0 Kawasaki Frontale 1; Urawa Reds 2 Oita Trinita 1.

JAPAN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Urawa Reds	28	19	7	2	50	23	64
Gamba Osaka	28	17	7	4	59	30	58
Kashima	28	16	6	6	46	33	54
Shimizu SP	28	15	5	8	43	29	50
Kashiwa	28	13	7	8	38	24	46
Albirex	28	13	5	10	40	38	44
Jubilo Iwata	28	14	2	12	47	47	44
Yokohama FM	28	12	6	10	47	27	42
Kawasaki	28	10	10	8	47	42	40
JEF United	28	12	4	12	43	41	40
FC Tokyo	28	12	2	14	44	46	38
Grampus Eight	28	11	3	14	38	43	36
Vissel Kobe	28	10	5	13	46	44	35
Oita Trinita	28	8	5	15	34	52	29
Sanfrecce	28	8	5	15	38	59	29
Ventforet	28	7	4	17	30	52	25
Omiya Ardija	28	5	9	14	18	36	24
Yokohama FC	28	3	2	23	17	59	11

SOUTH KOREA

League stage

Sep 22: Busan 1 Songnam 3; Incheon 2 Suwon 3; Chunnam 2 Gyeongnam 1; Daejeon 4 Daegu 1; Chonbuk 1 Seoul 1; Gwangju 1 Ulsan 2.
Sep 23: Jeju 2 Pohang 0.
Sep 29: Pohang 2 Gwangju 1; Ulsan 2 Suwon 0; Gyeongnam 3 Jeju 1; Daegu 1 Chonbuk 1.
Sep 30: Seoul 4 Busan 0; Songnam 1 Incheon 1; Chunnam 1 Daejeon 2.
Oct 6: Jeju 2 Daejeon 3; Gyeongnam 1 Gwangju 0; Suwon 1 Pohang 0; Incheon 1 Ulsan 0.
Oct 7: Chonbuk 1 Chunnam 1; Busan 1 Daegu 4; Songnam 0 Seoul 0.
Oct 10: Jeju 2 Chonbuk 2; Daejeon 2 Gwangju 0; Chunnam 0 Busan 0; Gyeongnam 0 Suwon 0; Daegu 1 Songnam 2; Pohang 1 Ulsan 0; Seoul 2 Incheon 1.
Oct 14: Chonbuk 2 Gwangju 1; Daejeon 1 Suwon 0; Jeju 1 Busan 0; Gyeongnam 0 Ulsan 3; Daegu 1 Seoul 0; Pohang 3 Incheon 2; Chunnam 0 Songnam 2.

SOUTH KOREA – LEAGUE STAGE – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Songnam	26	16	7	3	43	18	55
Suwon	26	15	6	5	36	24	51
Ulsan	26	12	9	5	33	22	45
Gyeongnam	26	13	5	8	41	30	44
Pohang	26	11	6	9	27	31	39
Daejeon	26	10	7	9	34	27	37
Seoul	26	8	13	5	23	16	37
Chonbuk	26	9	9	8	36	32	36
Incheon	26	8	9	9	30	32	33
Chunnam	26	7	9	10	24	27	30
Jeju	26	8	6	12	27	35	30
Daegu	26	6	6	14	35	46	24
Busan	26	4	8	14	20	39	20
Gwangju	26	2	6	18	14	44	12

Top six qualified for championship play-offs

The box-to-box midfielder: Michael Essien

Former Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho on Michael Essien

● VERSATILITY
"Someone who can play every position in midfield and several defensive ones, too, has to possess a superior feel for the game. He has great intelligence; the most difficult thing in football is to take the right options, to think quickly and well. Michael usually does. Defensively, he is close to perfection, and as an attacking force he is developing all the time."

● CHARACTER
"Many talk about him as a great player. I'd rather describe him as a great man. Psychologically he's unbreakable. In bad situations, his first instinct is to put in more effort and try to turn a defeat into a victory. As a human being and a professional, there's nothing selfish about him at all. He doesn't think about himself, only the well-being of the team."

● PHYSICAL QUALITIES
"He is a force of nature, a player who finds it quite easy to impose himself on a game of football. Michael is not one to play with the hand-brake on. Anyway, it would not be a good idea. He is compelled to bring all his great strength and stamina to the field of play."

● CONSISTENCY
"You can always be sure he's going to give a high-class performance. It's not in his nature to grade the matches he wants to do well in. He wants to win every match and lets nothing stand in his way of that."

WHAT THEY SAID

The Chelsea man was judged best by his fellow players

GAEL GIVET (above) (MARSEILLE)
"I've never seen such a physically-dominant player with so much technical ability and tactical awareness as Michael Essien [Chelsea]. It was like playing a runaway truck. Tacklers bounced off him, and he never slowed down; he was as dynamic in injury-time as at kick-off."

PETRI PASANEN (WERDER BREMEN)
"Steven Gerrard [Liverpool] really can do it all: win tackles, pass the ball accurately, drive the team forward and score goals. I just don't see a weakness."

TOMISLAV PIPLICA (above) (ENERGIE COTTBUS)
"Michael Essien is amazingly versatile, forceful and skilful. And, above all, I'm sure he has only scratched the surface of his great potential."

KIM KALLSTROM (LYON)
"I was very impressed with Torsten Frings [Werder Bremen] at the last World Cup. He was always in the thick of the action and never showed any sign of fatigue."

ANDREAS GORLITZ (KARLSRUHE)
"For me, Steven Gerrard is the complete footballer, one minute spraying the ball around in midfield, the next striking at goal. Majestic."

LUCIO (below) (BAYERN MUNICH)
"Michael Ballack [Chelsea] is a natural footballer. He is best known for his goals but is comfortable and productive in most areas of the pitch."

ERIK EDMAN (RENNES)
"When it comes to athletic qualities and sheer physical power, Michael Essien cannot be beaten. He would be even better if given a little more freedom."

RICARDO OSORIO (STUTTGART)
"Owen Hargreaves [Manchester United] will fight to the death and is just as effective breaking up attacks as breaking forward. He puts his heart and soul into every match."

JEAN MAKOUN (LILLE)
"Florent Malouda [Chelsea] is a magnificent team player of pace, fantastic technique and the right work ethic. Also, he has improved his composure in front of goal."

JEROME ROTHEN (PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN)
"Maniche [Atletico Madrid] has great energy and competitiveness, and what I especially like about him is the speed with which he gets his shots off."

ULRICH RAME (BORDEAUX)
"Next to Francesco Totti, Daniele De Rossi is Roma's most important player. He holds it together for them with his ball-winning ability, good distribution and eye for goal."

THE VOTES
3...Essien
2...Gerrard
1...Ballack, De Rossi, Frings, Hargreaves, Malouda, Maniche

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